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A. F. Augustine

In the Master's Vineyard

Serious and Entertaining Sketches from the Life
of a Lutheran Pastor

By Rev. A. F. Augustin



Rendered in English by
Rev. H. Brueckner, A.M.

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Dedication

THIS LITTLE BOOK I DEDICATE TO MY OLD
FRIENDS THE REV. S. W. FUCHS, JANES-
VILLE, WIS., AND THE REV. HENRY HARTIG,
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., IN REMEMBRANCE OF
OUR FELLOWSHIP AND OF OUR COMMUNION
IN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND WITH LASTING
AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE.

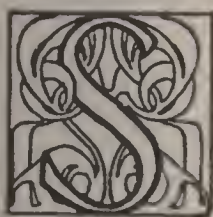
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FOREWORD



SOME years ago there appeared a book with the title, "Heitere und Ernste Bilder aus einem deutsch-amerikanischen Pastorenleben." The book was exceptionally well received. The religious press everywhere recommended it in warm terms, and it enjoyed an unusually large sale.

The friends of the book therefore prevailed upon the author to have it published also in the English language, and the Rev. H. Brueckner, A.M., of Iowa City, Iowa, kindly furnished the copy for the English edition.

"In the Master's Vineyard" is the new title of the book, but no alterations have been made in its contents. It is a faithful reproduction of the original. Care has been taken, however, not to make the book read like a translation. In pure English it relates the experiences of one who is at work in the Lord's vineyard, and it aims to influence all readers to enter upon this work.

May the Lord of the vineyard bless this little volume as it goes forth on its mission in a new garb and everywhere provide for it an open door.

The Author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD.....	III
I. THE BEGINNING OF MY MINISTRY.....	1
1. Entering the Field	1
2. Mr. Kriegel	7
3. My Hostess	11
4. The First Divine Service.....	14
5. visit and Call.....	17
6. The Day of My Ordination.....	21
7. Leading a Bachelor's Life.....	24
8. A Conference Trip.....	28
II. PECULIAR EXPERIENCES IN MY MINISTERIAL LIFE.....	37
1. An Unexpected Reward	37
2. A Wholesome Lesson.....	41
3. A Burial in the Dead of Night.....	45
4. A True Israelite.....	48
5. A Wedding	52
6. A Singular Confession	56
7. A Blessed Death.....	64
III. PEOPLE WHOM I HAVE MET.....	64
1. He Shook Off the Very Dust from His Feet.....	65
2. Mr. Pfalzgraf	69
3. May the Devil Be Present Also When We Pray?.....	72
4. Contradictions in the Bible.....	75
5. At the World's Fair.....	79
6. Visiting a Bachelor.....	83
7. His Epitaph	91
IV. ALL KINDS OF CHRISTIANS.....	98
1. The Doctor	98
2. Mr. Lebemann	100
3. Mrs. Froemmlich	102

	Page
4. Deacon Grobig	103
5. Father Martin	105
V. A FEW REMINISCENCES OF MY WORK AS AN ITINERANT MINISTER.....	110
1. The Little Church on the Prairie and How It Came Into Existence.....	110
2. An Ordination in the Primeval Forest.....	120
3. A Divine Service and a Baptism of Infants in a Court- house.....	127
4. Going Astray but Finding the Way.....	131
VI. SMALL TALK FOR THE READER'S BENEFIT.....	139
I.	139
II.	144
III.	148
IV.	152
V.	156
VI.	161
VII.	165
VIII.	170
IX.	175
X.	179

I. The Beginning of My Ministry

1. Entering the Field.

WITH glowing enthusiasm I went aboard the ship to cross the ocean. The parting scene was not without its touch of pathos. While the orchestra was playing merry tunes, and while several of my loved ones stood on the shore waving their handkerchiefs, my eyes became moist with tears. But the novelty of crossing the mighty sea for the first time, and the thought of the high calling I was to follow in America, soon crowded all feelings of pain and depression to the background. After a journey of twenty days, first by ship and then by train, I arrived at Mendota, Illinois, where the theological seminary of the Iowa Synod was then located. Here I fully expected to stay for some time.

However, man proposes, and God disposes. One day I was asked to come to the Director's house. "Brother Augustin," said he in his abrupt yet friendly way, "prepare to leave at once; you are to depart for your field of labor immediately." Seized with a sense of terror, I could not answer a word. "Two calls have arrived," he went on to say, "a congregation in Iowa asks for a pastor, and an elderly minister who has accepted a call to Kansas but can not go there on account of being ill, requests us to furnish a substitute for him. So you may take your choice, Iowa or Kansas."

By this time I had regained my composure sufficiently to reply, "I can not as yet enter the ministry; I want to remain here a while longer; I must learn to know American conditions and customs a little better before I venture forth." The

Director turned his penetrating eyes upon me and continued, "What, then, are we to do with the people who ask for a pastor, and what shall we write to the sick minister? Shall we tell them, 'There is a young man here whom we can recommend, but he refuses to be sent'?" The reader may imagine that in the face of such a situation my power of resistance broke down completely.

But before deciding whether I would go to Iowa or to Kansas (for I was given the privilege of choosing between the two), I secretly looked at a map of the United States, and finding that Kansas is between the same degrees of latitude as Italy, I hurried to the Director's house and told him, "I will go to Kansas." In my selfish heart I reasoned somewhat like this: "It will be much more agreeable to live in Kansas than in Iowa. Resembling Italy in point of climate and vegetation, Kansas no doubt abounds in orange groves and palm trees. Why should I not prefer such a state to that of Iowa, where, as I have been told, climatic conditions are not unlike those of Germany?" I also said to myself, "In Kansas I shall be only a substitute; the sick pastor will soon recover, and then I may go back to Mendota to take up my studies anew."

With traditional solemnity the scene of my departure from Mendota was enacted. In bidding me farewell, the Director remarked, with words of Holy Writ, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." These words struck home and made me feel heartily ashamed of my selfish thoughts. Soon I found myself seated in the train. With lightning speed I was being conveyed to the state of my choice, meanwhile passing through several other states, or portions of them. I gave free reins to my imagination, and began to paint pictures of my future home, in the most glowing colors. Shaded by palm

trees stood a neat little church; surrounding it were the dwellings of my parishioners, partly hidden from view by groves of orange trees; and in the immediate vicinity of the church was the parsonage, likewise shaded by palms, and covered with clinging vines. In spirit I saw the company of the faithful gathering in the courts of the Lord, and beheld myself attending to my sacred duties at the altar and in the pulpit.

"Kansas City!" shouted the negro brakesman. Being thus awakened from my enchanting day dream, I realized that I had come to the border line of Kansas, and that in less than half an hour I would be within the boundaries of the sunny Southern state of my choice. How my heart began to beat! I could hardly wait till the train started to move again. At last we were in Kansas! But what I saw was utterly devoid of Southern splendor. Here and there a farm house appeared, with a few trees very much like those I had seen in German forests. Wide stretches of pasture alternated with fields of corn and wheat. The train moved on. "Young man, go West," said Horace Greeley, offering the most wonderful inducements to heed his charge. I was a young man, and my hopes had taken on a Western direction; but the farther I went Westward, the more cheerless the landscape grew. Before long I could see nothing but the nude, gray, monotonous prairie. At long intervals a house might come to view, but no trees and no shrubbery of any kind to form its environment. My dream of Italian beauty and luxury had vanished. I felt sorely disappointed, and even wished that I might have given preference to Iowa instead of Kansas. However, I tried to find comfort in the thought that after all nothing can happen to us without the will of our Father in heaven.

After a ride of six or seven hours, I was coming near to my destination. With a curiosity hardly pardonable in a

man, I looked out of the window, still hoping, though almost against hope, that a palm tree or an orange grove might make its appearance. But nothing of the kind presented itself to view. "West City!" I had reached my destination, and got off the train. With a single sweep of the eyes I encompassed the whole city. Like a mushroom, it had sprung up but a few years ago. Attracted to it by a huge sign, I had my baggage taken to the "Windsor House." Then I strolled up and down the few streets of the town, looking with special interest at the various churches, and wondering in which one of them I was henceforth to preach. On returning to the Windsor House, I found the tables all set for dinner. I took my place at one of them and regaled myself with some tough beefsteak, a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. While paying for my repast, I asked the landlord which of the four churches was the Lutheran, and where I might find some of the Germans who lived in West City. He replied, "There is no German church here." I was truly startled; had I, then, gone too far or not far enough on the train? The hotel keeper noticed the startled expression in my face, and, being moved with a sense of compassion, pointed to a store on the opposite side of the street, saying, "There you will find a man who is a German; perhaps you can get more information from him."

Having thanked the hotel keeper for his kind advice, I crossed the street to confer with Mr. Gueldenpfennig. I told him I was a German pastor, looking for a German Lutheran church in the city, but unable to find one. Mr. G. smiled, but in such a way as to show that he had grasped the situation. "The congregation for which you are looking, said he, "is out in the country, fourteen miles from here." "Fourteen miles!" I exclaimed, thinking of German miles; "then I did not ride quite far enough on the train?" Without grow-

ing the least bit excited, he replied, "You got off at the right station; the rest of the way you will have to travel by wagon. People from that neighborhood come to the city practically every day, so that you will in all probability find a chance to ride out there with someone."

While Mr. Gueldenpfennig was still speaking, his eyes turned toward the door, through which a man was just then entering. Shall I give you a description of this man? I think I shall, because he was the very first member of my congregation that I saw. He was a man of huge proportions, as if descended from Anak, whose giant offspring we find mentioned in the Book of Joshua. His hair, somewhat tinged with gray, was parted in the middle, and in snarly locks extended down to his shoulders. The expression of his smoothly shaved face was not such as to make it repulsive, yet it failed to inspire one with a feeling of confidence. His attire was that of a farmer, though somewhat peculiar in style. "Mr. Strack," said the merchant, "this gentleman wants to be taken out to your settlement; he is the new pastor." Advancing a few steps, Mr. Strack shook hands with me. After looking me over from head to toe, he dryly remarked, "All right, you may ride with me." The tone of his voice plainly indicated that the close examination to which he had subjected me did not prove to be altogether in my favor.

A little later, I was seated beside Mr. Strack on his wagon, and riding with him in the direction of my future parish. Where were all the glorious things I had imagined? The reader may shake his head, but I am frank enough to confess that my dream had even included a portal of honor through which I would be asked to pass. I had seen something of the kind in Germany; why should not I be accorded such honor? But my arrival was not even expected, although the people had been informed of my coming. Perhaps the

letter containing this information was still lying at the post office, well preserved. As a consequence, not a soul had been looking for me. The parsonage was in an unfinished condition. No preparations of any kind had been made. All this I was told on the way. Meanwhile my coachman drove so fast that I had to hold on for dear life. In the rougher places I repeatedly lost my balance and barely escaped tumbling down from the wagon. To the numerous questions that my coachman asked me I simply answered yes and no. I was too busy with my thoughts to pay very much attention to him. I accused myself of having brought on my own disappointment. Why had I imagined so many things that were not founded in fact!

But had I any reason for treating Mr. Strack with such an air of indifference? After all, he was innocent. I had only myself to blame. Was I not even under obligation to him for taking me along and disillusioning me in advance? So I silently decided to be a little more pleasant toward him. Hardly had I come to this decision when my neighbor raised his whip and pointed to a house not far ahead of us, saying, "That is where our Baker lives." In my former mood I probably would have simply replied, "Is that so?" But now I remarked that I had thought every housewife in this vicinity did her own baking, and that I was really surprised to hear that the congregation had a professional parish baker. At this Mr. Strack gave me a peculiar look and said in a tone of contempt, "This man's *name* is Baker." I said nothing in reply, feeling that in the eyes of Mr. Strack I had made a fool of myself. This was indeed what he thought; for later I heard that he had zealously related our conversation about Mr. Baker to others, adding the remark, "He is an insignificant little man, who will not be with us long."

The journey came to an end. My teamster took me to

the house of a parishioner with whom I was to stay until the parsonage was finished. I had seen the parsonage. It was almost too unpretentious in appearance. I had given up all thought of a palm grove, and would have been ever so glad if only a gnarly oak had spread its branches over the roof. I think I would even have been satisfied if an old crippled poplar had come to my sight. But there was nothing. Out on the bare prairie a square box, coming to a point toward the top, rose to the sky. That was the parsonage, or what was to be the pastor's residence. Mr. Kriegel (for that was the name of my host) shook hands with me and bade me welcome. Giving me an extra look, he remarked, "I suppose you are still very young?" Yes, I was still young, that I could not deny. So I had reached my destination. Having been taken to the room in which I was to live for the time being, I sat down on a chair at the only window, from which one had nothing to look out upon but an extended cow pasture. As I reflected on my dismal surroundings, my eyes grew moist, and from my heart I breathed the sigh, "Lord, help me!"

2. Mr. Kriegel.

Hardly had I finished brushing a little of the dust from my clothes when Mr. Kriegel, the owner of the house, appeared on the scene. His bodily stature was that of a giant. In this respect he bore a strong resemblance to Mr. Strack. As for his mental capacity, it was of such a nature that one might have applied to him, in its inverted order, the saying of Kaiser Rudolf, "Weak in body, strong in mind." "Well," said he, "I suppose you are from Germany?" "Yes," I replied, "and am I to infer that you are a native of America?" "No," he answered, "we are from Russia; but we are not Russians, we only call ourselves Russian people because we lived in Russia for a long time."

This bit of information explained a number of things that I had noticed in my parishioners, and that seemed rather strange to me. In a lengthy discourse Mr. Kriegel told me all about their relation to the Russian Czar. Around the middle of the eighteenth century Katherine II of Russia published a manifesto in which it was stated that all German immigrants who permanently settled in her domain should to all eternity be exempt from paying taxes and from rendering military service. "Yes," my informant assured me, "I myself saw the Czarina with the manifesto in her hand; she stood in the market place at Saratow." Of course, he meant the statue of the Czarina. But after a hundred years had rolled away, the Czar declared that eternity was at an end, and that the German settlers in the Volga region would henceforth have to pay taxes. Moreover, all male children born from that time on would be required to serve in the Russian army. The Czar also made these things known in a manifesto, but Mr. Kriegel did not claim to have seen him with this document in his hand.

The Czar's manifesto created no little excitement at the time; but the German colonists soon regained their equilibrium. The town clerk, the most intelligent man among them, had remarked, "Who knows what may happen by the time these little chaps will be old enough to wear a uniform?" However, the time for drafting them into the army came sooner than one could realize. So the colonists simply fooled the Czar and—*emigrated*. This brought Mr. Kriegel's speech to a climax. The closing sentence had the effect of giving his face a relatively cunning expression.

Giving our conversation a slightly different turn, I inquired, "So all the members of this congregation are from Russia?" "Yes," he replied, "we are all even from the same part of Russia and nearly all related to one another."

Then, without being particular about making a gradual transition to a new line of thought, he very abruptly asked, "How do you like it here?" I could not have said I was delighted with my new surroundings, and if I had disclosed the true state of my heart, he probably would have said, "You are not cut out for a pastor at all." Perhaps he would not have been entirely wrong in passing such a judgment. Under the circumstances I used as much diplomacy as I could without doing violence to the truth, and simply remarked, "Having just arrived here, I hardly feel able to answer your question." "Oh," was his reply, "I think you will like it here, because we are all brethren and sisters." Noticing that I did not quite comprehend the significance of this last statement, he went on to say, "You see, we have been following the practice of coming together in the different homes on Sunday afternoon or in the evening to talk over the sermon, to sing and pray, and sometimes to try our hand at explaining the Scriptures."

Here I interposed, "Was your pastor present at these meetings?" "No," he replied, "we had among the brethren men who were very learned and altogether capable of interpreting the Bible. They had also received no little light on the prophetic books. We spent many a blessed and fruitful hour together." I ventured to remark, "Such meetings are fraught with great danger. They have given rise to many sects. For these people, the church gradually does not seem good enough anymore. So they form small societies of their own, each one of which deems itself just a little above the rest." Mr. Kriegel admitted this in a general way, but maintained that no such danger existed with them. Said he, "We always attended the regular church services, and called ourselves brethren of the church."

"Have you such meetings here, too?" I asked. "Yes," replied my loquacious host, "but very rarely, since we live so

far apart. However, we do call ourselves brethren and sisters, and we address one another in the good old familiar style, saying 'Du' instead of 'Sie.' I think this is right, too. God himself permits us to say 'Du' to him when we pray. Pastor, I think you and I also should adopt this form of address when speaking to each other. For, it is written, 'One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren' !"

By this time I began to feel like a young minister when in preaching his first sermon he suddenly loses the thread of his thought. But I soon regained my composure sufficiently to reply, "My dear Mr. Kriegel, personally I would not care the snap of a finger whether you addressed me in the polite or in the familiar form of speech. It so happens, however, that I am your pastor, so I must ask you to respect the office which I hold, and to use the polite form in addressing me." At this Mr. Kriegel grew sarcastic. There was something sharp in his tone of voice as he replied, "You may be right; but I also know the Scriptures; when the Lord speaks of the ministers he often says, 'Woe unto you, scribes.'" Here I interrupted him and said, in a tone of voice that may have been none too soft either, "But in all such cases the Lord has in mind those who only imagine themselves to be at home in the Scriptures, while in reality they know very little or nothing about the Bible and its interpretation; so you must also apply this 'Woe unto you, scribes' to yourself."

Mr. Kriegel's ire had by this time reached the seething point. His face grew red, his eyes flashed and, raising his voice to its highest pitch, he fairly shouted, "You are the first one who has dared to tell me that I am not able to explain the Scriptures; perhaps I have preached oftener than you." Evidently, I had struck a sore spot, and who knows what might have happened if the hostess had not appeared on the scene

to invite us to dinner! As it was, I simply remarked, "We will discontinue our conversation; for I am very hungry."

3. My Hostess.

I still remember her most vividly, the dear woman with her pleasant face. Whether she is even now in the land of the living, I am unable to say. If she is no longer here on earth, I feel assured that she is numbered with the company of those who sing the hymn of victory at the crystal sea. In those early days, when I began my career as a pastor, she was a veritable Godsend to me. Next to a kind Providence, it was she who kept me from utterly losing courage.

What a contrast between this good woman and the man with whom she was unequally yoked together for life! He was a physical giant, she a little body. He was loquacious and liked to brag, she was imbued with a quiet spirit and showed her piety in works rather than in words. His Christianity was of the Pharisaic type, hers that of a sincere and modest disciple of Jesus. How she put forth her best effort to make my stay at her home as pleasant as possible under the circumstances! As she often mediated between her husband and the children in order to restore domestic peace and tranquillity, so she also many a time served as peacemaker when her husband and the pastor were at outs with each other. Sad to say, Mr. Kriegel and I were on the war path quite frequently, and I am willing to admit that the fault did not always lie entirely with him.

A few specific instances will best show in what way Mrs. Kriegel tried to make life pleasant for me. The fair reader may regard them as mere trifles, but it is just such seemingly insignificant things that furnish the materials for the web of life. I had a weakness for potato pancakes. My hostess had never heard of them and consequently did not know how

to prepare this favorite dish of mine. One day I undertook to give her thorough instructions in this branch of the culinary art, with the result, that we had potato pancakes for dinner nearly every day. That my appetite for this "German pie," as my hostess chose to call it, became somewhat stunted by such a process of over-feeding, does not reflect on her good will. She verily did what she could.

Mrs. Kriegel had noticed that I used the quill of a chicken feather to clean my pipe, and that a few quills were always kept in readiness for this purpose. Wishing to do me a favor, my good hostess saw to it that my writing desk was ever after supplied with veritable bundles of quills from all kinds of fowl that ran about in the yard.

The first time I took supper at the Kriegel home, the lord of the house said grace at the table. His wife, in compliance with 1 Cor. 11:5-7, covered her head with a black cloth; and I do not recall that I ever saw her pray with her head uncovered. On the table there stood a dish of food that aroused my curiosity. I had never seen anything like it. They called it "pyrock." The fair reader may some day want to try her hand at preparing this unique dish, so I shall give her the recipe. Stir up a dough, flatten it with a rolling pin and cut it up into square pieces. Fill these with steamed onions, fold them so that they look like miniature pillows and bake them in the oven. The result of this procedure may appeal to the taste of the fair reader and her household (tastes differ, you know), but "pyrock" failed to gratify my sense of taste. In fact, its peculiar flavor went against me; I simply could not eat it. Good table manners usually prompt us to swallow even the unpalatable kinds of food, but in the present instance I had to set all rules of table etiquette aside and begged to be excused for not helping myself to this novel and unique dish. Nor was it necessary for me to commit any

more breeches of table etiquette in this direction. So tactful was my hostess, and so considerate, that henceforth "pyrock" quite disappeared from her bill of fare.

During supper, Mr. Kriegel was sullenly mute, while his wife, contrary to her disposition, talked a great deal. All that she told me was intended to strengthen my courage. Among other things she said, "You may be sure that there are many in the congregation who will pray for you." This assurance brought joy to my heart. Is there anything more precious to a troubled pastor than the consciousness that in his congregation there are devout souls praying for him? You may believe me, kind reader, we ministers of the Gospel, especially here in America, are much in need of your prayers. If people would only pray as much as they murmur and criticise, what a blessing it would be for the church! How much strife and contention could thus be avoided!

That my hostess was among those who prayed for their pastor, of this I am absolutely sure. Later, when she was a bed-ridden sufferer for years, her strength of faith, her quiet patience, and her inner peace, which she retained in spite of the rough treatment to which she was subjected by her husband, were to me a source of great strength and encouragement in my pastoral office.

O what a blessing it is to have people of this type in the congregation! How many can be won for Christ by the Christian conduct of a woman, without the word! On the other hand, who can estimate the harm that is done by those Christians who say but do not? One good example is worth more to the church than a hundred pious speeches. Would that we who are called Christians might all be in a position to say with the apostle, "Brethren, be followers of me, and mark those who walk so as ye have us for an example!"

4. The First Divine Service.

Sunday arrived, and I was to conduct my first service in my first parish. I arose early, in order to collect my thoughts for the occasion. Although we were not in the Advent season, I had decided to preach on the Epistle for the third Sunday in Advent. It contains these words: "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Nothing more nor less may be expected of the Christian ministry. This was a source of great comfort to me at the time. Later I often wondered why I chose that text, because it has always seemed hard for me to preach from it. The reason may easily be imagined. One does not like to expose oneself to the public gaze. Yes, that was what I seemed to be doing. In spite of all efforts to be faithful in the fulfillment of my ministerial duties, I could not but accuse myself of having been more or less unfaithful.

It was time for the service to begin. While riding to church, I could see from a distance that the people had turned out in great numbers. They had cast a veritable trench of wagons about the church. It seemed that everybody was anxious to see and hear the new pastor. Some may have come out of sheer curiosity, but let us not judge them too severely for the lack of a better motive. The curious we have with us always. Whenever something special is to be expected, such as a confirmation, a marriage ceremony or a Christmas program, we ministers see faces in the audience that are seldom, if ever, seen at an ordinary church service. On such occasions, the pastor may feel strongly tempted to read the riot act to those who come to church only to satisfy their curiosity. Whatever my brethren in the ministry may think about the matter, I am of the opinion that at such times we should preach the Gospel, not only in its serious aspects, but also in all its beauty and loveliness, so that even those who

ordinarily do not attend the church services may be enticed to come again at their very first opportunity. At any rate, we must guard against the danger of giving the people just cause for insinuating that it is the preachers who by incessantly railing at the tardy church goers keep them from coming again.

After this slight digression, I must tell the indulgent reader of the first impression that I received of my church. One could hardly call it a church, since it was a plain stone building without a steeple and without a bell. The interior consisted of four bare white walls and a sea of roughly made pews. I could see no altar, and there was no organ to accompany the singing. "But wasn't there a pulpit?" you might ask. Yes, at the extreme north end of the auditorium stood something with a shape not unlike that of an ordinary barrel, and covered with a blue worsted cloth. Upon this barrel-shaped structure rested a square box, the upper side of which slanted a little toward the front. It also had a blue cloth covering. This box could easily be removed, and so it took but a moment to change the pulpit into an altar. That part of the covering which hung down over the edge of the altar was supplied with a cross made of black velvet ribbon. So the cross was there, although in a very crude form, the sign in which we Christians are to conquer, the chief symbol of the Christian religion. It was the only thing in the way of an emblem that the church contained, and for this reason it was doubly comforting to my heart. But the chief requirements of a divine service, the best and most glorious ornament to any church, was plainly in evidence: the auditorium was completely filled with hearers, and under my arm I carried the Bible.

The service began with the usual introductory hymn. From the very start my heart grew warm when I saw and

heard that all, old and young alike, joined in the singing with a vim. On the other hand, what can be more disheartening than to announce the hymn and not to find any response on the part of the congregation? There is something wrong where the congregation takes no active interest in the musical part of the service. The Lutheran church, with its almost inexhaustible treasury of song, must ever be and remain a singing church. One thing that impressed me rather uniquely was the strict separation of the sexes, the men sitting on the one and the women on the other side of the middle aisle. The men nearly all had their hair parted in the middle and wore it unusually long, while the women had their heads covered with black cloths, so that I could not get rid of the idea that I was conducting a service in a nunnery.

After the altar service, I entered the pulpit to deliver my sermon. The Lord heard my prayer, so that I finished my discourse without a hitch. This was my good fortune, since I afterwards learned that the people were superstitious enough to believe that if a pastor broke down in his sermon he could be regarded as having been forsaken by the Lord, and as being unfit for the holy office. To comfort those who may have been so unfortunate as to break down in their sermon, or who may at some future time come to grief in this respect, I will quote the words of a pastor who has grown old and gray in the service: "A minister who has never lost the thread of his discourse is not a real pastor at all when it comes to showing the right mind of sympathy to others. For, how can he understand the feeling of another minister who has had the misfortune of 'getting stuck' in his sermon?" The reader may decide for himself whether this statement, together with the inference drawn from it, is altogether correct; but its sentiment is surely commendable. As for me, the sight of such a large and appreciative congregation in-

spired me with a feeling of great joy, and when, at the close of the service, the people all came to shake hands with me and wished me the blessing of almighty God for my ministry among them, a good share of my despondency had vanished. With sentiments of praise in my heart and words of thanksgiving on my lips, I returned to my quiet room.

5. Visit and Call.

During the weeks that followed this first service, I made it a point to visit my parishioners. I wanted to come into personal contact with them and thus learn to know them better. For a shepherd should know his flock. How can we preach effectively unless we are familiar with the faults and frailties, the trials and temptations of the people committed to our charge? Somewhere, I do not remember where or when, I read something that stirred me to the very depths of my being. I shall, therefore, quote the gist of it in this connection: "The mute question that each congregation asks its new pastor is, 'Have you the courage and the firm will to become associated with us simple folk on our way through life, and is your conduct, as well as your education, of such a type that we may confidently follow you? We are quite aware of the fact that we have a great deal to learn; but we can not be guided by the Word only, we need to see this Word embodied in a living personality. Please do not stand aloof from us, or deem yourself too good and too highly educated to be our companion; for otherwise we shall lose confidence in you and go astray.'" If these words are true, and I believe they are, then it is necessary for a pastor to visit his parishioners, and to visit them as their *pastor*. In my own case it has happened many a time that I spent an hour or more at the home of a parishioner and talked about everything under the sun, without saying so much as a single word in a pastoral

capacity. But it has also happened that when I began to talk about spiritual matters the people with whom I was visiting fell into a state of passivity and observed a silence as deep as that of the grave. Evidently, there are parishioners who would prefer not to have the pastor converse with them on spiritual matters. Still, a pastor must not neglect the main thing. Do not grow angry, dear reader, if your pastor does not visit you once every week; when he does pay you a visit, however, do not try to hold him down to a friendly chat with you, since it is his business also to advise you in matters spiritual.

The foregoing paragraph has taken us rather far afield. I really did not start out to tell you what visits I made in my new parish, but my intention was to say something about a visit that others paid me. I had been in my new parish about two months, when on a certain day, shortly after supper time, three members of the church board stepped into my room. At that very moment I had just finished writing a letter to a dear friend, telling him that I hoped to return to the seminary before long. This hope was not to be realized, as the reader will presently see. The three deacons had come for a purpose. They wore their black frockcoats and presented a very solemn appearance. I asked them to be seated. For some moments they observed utter silence, but finally one of them broke the spell. Said he, "Pastor, while assembled at one of our homes recently, a brother told us about a man named Jabez. This name is said to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Can you tell us whether this is true, and what kind of a man this Jabez was?" Now, a great many names are mentioned in the Bible, and a pastor can not be expected to know them all, nor is this necessary. But concerning the name Jabez I was able to give the desired information at once. A day sooner I could not have done it. However, it

so happened that just the evening before I had been reading in "Funke's School of Life," and gained the information that the name Jabez is recorded in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, where it is said that "Jabez was more honorable than his brethren." Pastor Funke thus helped me out of my embarrassment, for which I am grateful to him even now, because otherwise I would have had to confess my ignorance, and that would have discredited me mightily in the eyes of my deacons and those whom they represented. If at this juncture any one of my brethren in the ministry should interrupt me and ask, "Why did you not consult the Concordance or the Bible Dictionary?" I should have to reply, "I had none in my library at that time."

After No. 1 had received my answer to his question, No. 2 spoke up. Drawing his chair a little closer, he inquired, "Pastor, what are Dudaim?" I could not remember that I had ever heard such a name, so I asked, "Why?" "O," said he, "this word also is to be found in the Bible, and we would like to know its meaning. "I had a copy of the German Bible in my hand, and since it contained a brief dictionary of Bible terms in the back part, I quickly looked for the name mentioned, and luckily I found it. I turned to the reference, Genesis 30:14, where it is said, "And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found Dudaim (mandrakes) in the fields. I read these words and also cited the definition I had found in the index, "A sort of love apple." By this time I was beginning to feel just a little uncomfortable. It was as if I were being subjected to a rigid examination.

Contrary to my expectation, however, No. 3, instead of popping a new question, drew forth from his inside coat pocket a ratified letter of call and handed it to me. I had passed my examination satisfactorily, and they were now ready to call me as their regular pastor. "Impossible!" I ex-

claimed, "I can not remain with you as your regular pastor; you have already called another man, who will doubtless arrive in the near future." Nothing daunted, they replied, "God calls His servants through the congregation; surely you do not want to be disobedient to God when He calls you? So you are in duty bound to accept the call." "But how can I?" I replied, "the pastor whom you have called, and whose substitute I am, will presently make his appearance." "No, he isn't coming!" they exclaimed, as with a single voice, without growing the least bit excited. In fact, they were so definite in their statements that I was compelled to sit up and take notice. The whole truth was thus brought to light. Without my knowledge they had written to the pastor whom I had in mind, and told him that they wanted to keep the young pastor, that in his declining years he would not need to undertake the long and strenuous journey, and that they desired to have him return the letter of call which he had received from them. But before their letter had reached its destination, they themselves received a letter informing them that the aged pastor whom they had called was unable to come on account of being ill, and that they would be obliged now to call someone else. Thus it came about that I was called. I told them that I would have my answer ready for them in about two weeks, and so they took their leave.

No sooner had they left than I sat down and wrote to my old Director at Mendota: "1. I am too young; 2. I must study a while longer; I, therefore, can not accept the call." By return mail I received his reply: "Let no man despise thy youth (1. Timothy 4:12). Who can ever be worthy to serve in such a high calling? Accept the call in God's name." An inner struggle followed. For a time "I can not" and "I will not" had the upper hand. But at last I found a place of anchorage in the resolution, "As God directs me I will go,

my carnal will denying." On the following Sunday I told my congregation, "I will be your pastor."

6. The Day of My Ordination.

The day of my ordination soon made its appearance. The church authorities commissioned two of my brethren in the ministry to perform the sacred rite. The one came on horseback. Only a few weeks previously he had got the horse from a ranch, and it had never been ridden before. Not until he had repeatedly been pressed to the bosom of mother earth rather urgently by the refractory animal, did it suffer him to ride it. The other of the two brethren was the proud possessor of a vehicle, which had but two wheels, but the seat of which was preferable to the back of an unbroken broncho. They both put up at the Kriegel home, where I still had my room. Mr. Kriegel was not slow to chide them for coming in such proud fashion. He argued that the apostles always made their journeys on foot, and that it was the duty of the present day ministers to follow the example of the apostles in this mode of travel. The two guests of Mr. Kriegel tried to justify themselves by demonstrating to him that if they had started out on foot they would not have reached their destination in time to be present at the ordination service. But Mr. Kriegel dryly remarked, "In that event we could have taken it upon ourselves to ordain our pastor; for it is written, 'Ye are a royal priesthood.'"

Happily, the two pastors were at hand, and they officiated at my ordination. The one who preached the sermon had chosen as his text the words, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." By the laying on of hands I was formally entrusted with the holy office, and God knows that I solemnly vowed faithfully to fulfill the duties of my sacred calling with His gracious help.

When the solemnities at the church had come to a close, we were invited by one of the parishioners to visit at his house. I accepted the invitation in behalf of myself and my two guests. We got into Mr. Kriegel's wagon, and I asked him to take us to the house in question. But he very coolly replied, "I will not do it." "Why not?" I asked. "I have not been invited," he rejoined. "Well," said I, "then take us there at least and afterwards return to your home." To this he replied, "I shall do nothing of the kind." Accordingly, we got down from Mr. Kriegel's conveyance, and were taken to our destination by another man. A few hours later we again arrived at Mr. Kriegel's home. Scarcely had we withdrawn to my room when Mr. Kriegel appeared on the scene. He at once began to scold and fume in the most senseless way. Instead of Kriegel he should have been called Krieg (the German word for war) because he certainly was on the war path almost incessantly. In the present instance, he addressed the three of us most rudely, using the "Du" instead of the "Sie" form of speech. The words which he employed would not look well in print, so I refrain from writing them down. Suffice it to say that he reached the very pinnacle of rudeness and quite exhausted his vocabulary of abusive terms.

After all, what was at the bottom of his railing and fuming? We did not know for some time, but we finally learned that the ultimate cause of his senseless raving was wounded pride. He had not been invited along with the three ministers, and *their* wrong consisted in the fact that they accepted the invitation without considering him, since it is written, "Whoever will not receive you, shake off the very dust from your feet." When we, in the light of this passage of Scripture, tried to make him see the error of his way, his fury grew boundless and he fairly yelled his words. I said, "Under these circumstances I can not remain in your house any longer."

To show that I was in earnest, I at once began to pack my things. But he demanded, "All this must stay right here, because you still owe me some money for board and lodging."

It was useless to argue with such a man, so we left his house. The lady of the house and her children stood there crying, and begging us not to be angry with them. We went to one of the deacons, and in less than an hour's time nearly all the voting members of the congregation were gathered about us. They expressed their deepest indignation and demanded that I go to the church at once to pronounce the bans upon Mr. Kriegel, thus putting him out of the congregation as one unworthy of enjoying the rights and privileges of a church member. This I did not do, but the reader may believe me when I tell him that I was very sad at heart. As often as I think of my ordination day, this whole disgraceful scene stands vividly before my mental vision. Thus from the very beginning I was taught the lesson that the office of the ministry is difficult no less than precious. My two colleagues returned home after they had tried to comfort me with the words of Paul to Timothy, "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." But it took some time before the troubled heart had grown quiet and was able to say, "Thy will be done."

After the lapse of several days, I called on Mr. Kriegel, without being accompanied by anyone. I had been advised to take several strong men with me, since the hot temper of that man was well known, and it was feared that something worse might happen. But I struck out for his house alone, commending myself into the hands of God and beseeching Him to bless my efforts at reconciliation. Mr. Kriegel was doing odd jobs out in the yard. When he saw me, he advanced a few steps in my direction, and without uttering a word he gave me a kiss. I surely was taken by surprise, but

believed the kiss to be a good omen and breathed with less difficulty. We went into the house, and I told him of the wrong he had done. He said that while he had not as yet been able to persuade himself to come to me, he had been quite subdued by my coming to him, and that if I should demand it he would be willing publicly to confess his guilt and beg the pardon of all to whom he had given offense. Peace was restored, and, although we did not find unalloyed pleasure in each other's company, our mutual relations were at least bearable. Several years later, when I left those regions and bade Mr. Kriegel farewell, he pressed a silver dollar into my hand, saying, "God bless you; we have always got along well with each other."

7. Leading a Bachelor's Life.

It was not a great while until the parsonage was ready for occupancy. So I moved into my new quarters to lead the life of a bachelor. I will not invite the reader to examine my surroundings at close range. That might give me a feeling of discomfort. But I can say without boasting that at certain intervals I cleaned my rooms quite thoroughly, and had a cooked meal at least once a day. There were but few items on my bill of fare, which had the advantage that I was never troubled about changing the menu. My dishes and cooking utensils were also few in number, so that from sheer necessity I had to follow the rule of keeping things tied up in packages. The good women of the congregation provided me with things to eat, never permitting me to suffer want in the way of food. In a sense I had a right to expect these provisions, since in my vocation or letter of call it was stated, "We will see to it that our pastor always has something to eat." This promise followed immediately upon the written request that their pastor should supply them with spiritual

meat and drink. The letter of call was one of the old type, not a printed formula, with here and there a few inserted words and numbers, but a document prepared in writing by the secretary of the congregation and signed by the members of the church board. So, while I tried to do my duty in supplying my parishioners with the bread of life that nourishes the soul, they faithfully lived up to their promise in supplying me with the food that is needed for one's bodily sustenance. I never lacked provisions. The upper part of my cupboard often looked like a bakery, while the lower part resembled a meat market. In this respect I can put my first congregation up for a model. It can not be said of every congregation that it makes such ample provision for its pastor. On the contrary, there is many a congregation whose members are financially well off, but whose pastor often lacks the very necessities of life. Just recently a pastor told me that he had to beg for every bundle of hay and for every bushel of corn that he needed to feed his horse, although in the formal call the congregation had promised to supply him with these things. Another pastor informed me that one of his deacons had said, "Pastors should be kept on short rations, lest they become arrogant;" and this remark was made by him when the congregation was about to give the pastor, who was receiving less than an ordinary day laborer, a raise of fifty dollars a year. It cuts one to the quick to see what miserably small salaries some congregations pay their ministers, as if it were not written, "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things," and again, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel." Is it a matter of surprise if a pastor whose heart is burdened with the care for his bodily sustenance, in addition to the other cares and trials that rest heavily upon him, loses cour-

age, and if the joy he used to find in his work is sadly on the wane? If the congregations are small and poor, the right kind of pastor will not object to sharing their poverty with them; but if a congregation is fully able to pay its pastor an adequate salary, and fails to do its plain duty toward him, its conduct is simply abominable, and such a congregation really does not deserve a pastor.

But enough of this touchy subject; I must take up the thread of my narrative. As stated, my congregation fulfilled its duty toward me in making ample provision for my bodily needs. Still, one night I had to go to bed hungry. How this happened, I must now tell you. One day, that part of Kansas in which I lived was visited by a violent blizzard. Unfortunately, my supply of coal was exhausted, and wood was not to be had in that part of the state. One of my parishioners wanted to bring me a load of coal that very day, but he did not carry out his intention, and in view of the terrible storm I could not blame him. The cold grew more bitter right along, and the whirl of snow became so dense that one could not see three steps ahead. My victuals were all frozen as hard as a rock. Something warm to eat and drink would have relieved my sufferings, but how could I cook without a fire, and how was I going to build a fire without either coal or wood? Suddenly it occurred to me that down in the cellar there was a pile of corn husks that might be used for fuel. I therefore filled my coffee pot with snow (the well was blown shut), set it on the stove and went after some corn husks. With these I kindled a fire. But the new kind of fuel that I had brought into requisition was quickly consumed, and I was compelled to keep up a lively chase up and down the cellar steps to secure more food for the flames. Thus I hoped to cause the snow to melt and the resulting water to heat. But there was trouble brewing. Coming up from the regions be-

low with another supply of corn-husks, I opened the door to the stove, and found that the fire had completely gone out. Nothing but a mess of blackness stared me in the face. What had happened? Alas, the bottom had dropped out of the coffee pot. Evidently I had not packed the snow down enough. For lack of moisture, the soldering had melted and the bottom of the can had fallen into the fire, together with the snow, thus extinguishing the flames and also destroying all hope on my part to have a warm cup of coffee. Since I now had nothing in which to heat a little water, what else could I do but take to my bed? This was indeed, my only choice. It did not seem advisable to go to the neighbor's house, because in a blizzard one may get lost even while walking only a short distance.

The next morning the sun shone serenely through the window, my neighbor brought me a load of fuel, and when the stove began to radiate sufficient heat to warm the house, I soon forgot all about the discomforts and mishaps of the previous day. Later on, I often thought of this unpleasant experience, especially when I noticed here and there how unwilling my parishioners were to bear the cross that God had laid upon them. How gloomy I looked, and what discontent I showed, although what I had suffered amounted to nothing grievous! O how hard it is for us to be patient in tribulation! The lesson in patience is one that needs continuous application. Even after our hair has turned gray, and we have experienced many a gracious manifestation of God's very present help in trouble, we still must learn to possess our souls in patience. May we never forget that all things must work together for good to them that love God.

The things that seem as curses to our eyes
Proceed from God as blessings in disguise.

With this serious reflection let the bachelor's humorous story end.

8. A Conference Trip.

"Birds of a feather flock together." Every pastor feels the need of conferring with his fellow pastors. Many of our parishioners can not understand why their minister should want to attend conferences; and yet, every pastor would dispense with a lot of other things before he would deny himself the pleasure of coming together with his brethren in the ministry. Even from a purely human point of view his desire to attend these pastoral conferences is easy to understand. Then, too, when a group of pastors meet for consultation, they often have the most weighty matters to discuss. How many occasions arise when a pastor is expected to give advice or to lend help. Under such circumstances his mind is in a state of perplexity. He does not feel equal to the task of deciding this, that and the other case that is brought to his attention, yet this is expected of him. Now, it may happen that at the next conference which he attends the very problems that have puzzled him are taken under discussion. There is an exchange of opinion and certain conclusions are reached that will help him to solve his own special problems. How often has it not happened that I went to conference in a state of depression and returned in a state of elation! The pastoral conferences also have an educational value. Papers on theoretical and practical topics are prepared by the individual pastors and submitted to the conference for discussion and criticism. The conference serves the purpose of keeping its individual members mentally alert, prompting them to continue their theological studies, so that they may not experience the truth of the saying, "To rest is to rust." These are only a few hints to show in what different ways pastoral confer-

ences are beneficial. Much more might be said on the subject, but it would take us too far adrift.

In the West, a conference trip was often fraught with all kinds of difficulties and hardships. I shall now undertake to give the reader a description of such a trip. The place of meeting was in Nebraska, and I lived in the central part of Kansas. From East to West one could generally travel by train, but there were no rail-roads running North and South, while it was in a northern direction that I had to travel. Having no conveyance of my own, I was obliged to take advantage of all kinds of conveyances, however undesirable they might be in point of speed, comfort or safety. Even under the most favorable circumstances, it generally took a long time to return from a conference trip. Hence, it was necessary to make diverse preparations, including even the matter of one's last will and testament, before starting out on such a journey. But I finally got started. A coal wagon took me to the next city, a distance of fourteen miles. It was treshing time, and the farmers seldom went to town. I hoped, however, that on the present day such a thing might happen, and my hope was realized. A farmer from my neighborhood went to town to get a load of coal. The wagon was an old rattle-box and had already been put out of commission. In the present instance, however, it had again been pressed into service, so as to release the better vehicles for other purposes. The seat of this dilapidated rig consisted of a rough board lying crosswise on the wagon box. The horses were little more than skeletons, eking out a precarious existence. And yet, I welcomed the chance to get a ride, thinking that beggars shouldn't be choosers, and that poor riding is always better than proud walking, especially when it is a matter of covering many miles. The ministerial equipage, of course, had many objectionable features. For instance, one of the

tires was loose, so that my coachman had to alight every fifteen minutes to fasten the tire that was attempting to get away from us. Once it actually did effect its escape, and it took no end of labor and patience to put it back into place. My coachman hardly exchanged a word with me, because he needed all his eloquence to keep the two skeleton nags agoing. In spite of all, however, my main object was accomplished. Though somewhat late, we reached the city safe and sound.

After spending the night at a hotel, I arose in the morning to continue my trip by stage. This name suggests the idea of a well equipped conveyance; but in the present instance the name was highly misleading. The stage was nothing but a two-seated wagon of the most ordinary type. It was altogether different from the German Postkutsche, which I had sometimes used in the old country. But here again I had no other choice. I simply had to be satisfied with what I could find in order to reach my destination. The road was rough, and the sun hot. Tossed about incessantly, and suffering not a little from the intense heat, we made a sort of trip around the world, since all the little post stations had to be visited, no matter how far they were removed from the main road. At last the terminal station was reached, and I set out to walk a distance of six miles, so as to reach the home of a brother minister before sun-down. On the way I was overtaken by a thunder-storm, which was more terrible than any I had ever experienced. Being a lean little man, I was fairly blown along the street, until I found shelter in a small house along the way. I was a sorry sight, indeed. My laundry had been washed, though without soap, and so had I. My ministerial friend hardly recognized me. This seems all the less strange when one considers the circumstance that I presented myself to him in yellow boots, which

had taken on this unpastoral color from the soft yellow clay of the rain-soaked streets.

The next stretch of road was traveled in a two-wheeled cart. It belonged to my clerical host, who now became my traveling companion. He told me that his horse was a wild Texas pony which would soon make any decent vehicle present a sorry sight. Naturally, I was a little timid about entering this cart, all the more, because it really had room for only one person. But it had to be. So we tied our baggage to the back of the cart, and both got into the narrow seat. My heart was beating just a little faster than ordinarily; for I had rather grave apprehensions. "The horse has its peculiar notions," said my ministerial friend, "and we must take heed of them. Whenever I say, 'Down!' you must jump off, for there is danger ahead." How often he said, "Down!" I hesitate to record. Each time the horse started out at a break-neck speed, and after the lapse of about fifteen minutes my friend would return to pick me up again.

Weary and exhausted, we reached the home of the Rev. S. The next day I rode with him, since he had a team of horses and a two-seated vehicle. We did not move along very fast, but one could at least sit comfortable, and there was an agreeable change of scenery. As we rode along, we reached a place that was somewhat elevated. From that point of vantage we could look way into the distance and scan the vast prairie that spread out before us. Suddenly a gust of wind blew off my companion's hat and carried it far down into the valley. The owner of the hat following it in pursuit, repeatedly grabbed for his head protector, thinking that he had caught it, but ever discovering to his sorrow that he had *not* caught it. He had run so far away from our wagon that he appeared as small as a little boy. At last

he made one desperate leap for his head-gear, and managed to get possession of it much as one catches a fly between the two wings of a fly trap. Needless to say that the hat was a sorry sight.

Meanwhile, time sped on and it was growing rather late in the day. Our map showed that we should be approaching a city, but we drove on and on without discovering any signs of it. Night overtook us, and we were told by a farmer that we had driven past the city. We looked for the way back, but one of us had to walk ahead of the horses in order that we might not turn into a wrong road. At last we saw a light. That was the city. It consisted of only three houses and a few stables. Glad to have this place of habitation, we hurried to the inn and asked for something to eat; but the landlord bruskiy informed us that his house served supper at six o'clock, and not at such a late hour. So we went to the only store in town and bought some cheese and crackers to satisfy the demands of the hunger instinct. Then we returned to the inn and registered for the night. A room with two beds was placed at our disposal. We retired at once, hoping to sleep undisturbed; but around 10 o'clock two other guests entered our room, and since each of us was occupying a bed we each received a bed-fellow. We lay very still, but we could not sleep. At last, however, nature demanded her rights, and when we awoke our colleagues had gone. Doubtless they were both honorable men, but it makes one feel just a little uncomfortable to be lying in bed beside a total stranger.

The morning was glorious, and we were only ten miles away from the place where the conference was to be held. Without a mishap, we reached our destination. The church and the parsonage, as we took notice, were both made of sod, but presented a very neat appearance. All the other

members of the conference had already arrived. The fatiguing effects of the journey were presently forgotten and overcome. Soon our voices joined in singing:

How good it is for brethren, who know each other well,
In unity together on this fair earth to dwell.

All too soon the time of our brotherly communion and consultation drew to a close. However, this conference, too, had been most helpful, so that we all returned home with new strength and courage to resume our work in the Lord's vineyard. While homeward bound, our mode of travel was much like that of our outgoing trip. So I shall not weary the reader with a description that in all essentials would agree with what I have already related. But I must make mention of one thing that happened to us on our way home, and that may be of special interest to my readers. They will learn from it that when a pastor travels (and our itinerant ministers have to spend a good share of their time on the road), he is in perils much as St. Paul was in days of yore. What I am about to relate may also be taken as an expression of the praise and gratitude which I owe the ever faithful God, who still lives up to His gracious promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee," and again, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." The best proof for the effectiveness of prayer is the fact that we have experienced it. One who knows from experience what prayer has done for him will not be unsettled in his religious convictions by any adverse arguments produced by those who do not pray and therefore shrug their shoulders whenever a Christian maintains that God lends His ear to the prayers of His children.

Having bidden each other an affectionate farewell, and expressed the hope of meeting again in the near future, we regretfully took leave of the hospitable sod parsonage. A minute later I again sat beside my clerical friend on the narrow seat of his two-wheeled cart. I did not feel any too comfortable. With evil forebodings I watched the behavior of our Texas pony. A repetition of his old tricks made it necessary for me again and again to jump down from the seat and walk for a while, until the refractory pony came to his senses and calmed down. Still, we made fairly good headway, and of this I was glad, because I wanted to be with my own congregation again by the following Sunday. My colleague had decided to visit with me a while, so that I could look forward to rather an unsafe trip all the way home. But the antics of the Texas pony did not constitute the only source of danger and discomfort, as the reader is presently to hear. For several days it rained in torrents, and although I rather enjoyed, and still enjoy, riding in the rain (provided that a top buggy lends a measure of protection), I began to experience a feeling of discomfort in the present instance. We were still about twenty miles from my place of residence when we had to cross a rather wide creek. Usually, it has a very sluggish current, but the torrential rains had converted it into a swiftly flowing stream. After a brief consultation, we decided to cross. All went well until we reached the middle of the creek, when we noticed to our terror that our horse and conveyance were being carried along with the current. We still were seated in the cart, though submerged up to our shoulders. Of this we were hardly aware, our whole attention being directed to the horse, which had completely lost its foothold. The banks of the creek were both very steep, and besides we knew that a little farther down there was a turbulent waterfall. Unless we could manage some-

way to climb up either one of the steep embankments, we were doomed. The danger had reached its climax, and, having commended our souls to God, we were just at the point of jumping off the cart and trying to swim to the shore, when our pony, which all this time had kept remarkably calm, again touched bottom with its feet and brought us near the embankment. We managed, though not without much effort, to reach the shore, and also to rescue both our horse and cart. So we were safely out of the stream, even if it was a piece of misfortune that we had landed on that side of the river from which we had tried to reach the opposite shore. We betook ourselves to the nearest farm house, but its owner was unable to grant us shelter for the night, because he had a large family and his house contained only one room, which was simultaneously used as kitchen, parlor and bed chamber. We hastened to the next farm house, which was a mile farther away. There we found shelter for the night, and were accorded the most hospitable treatment. The farmer's wife brought me some of her husband's clothes, and soon I was comfortably seated at the kitchen stove, clad in red stockings, white trousers and a blue jacket. My colleague quickly attended to his Texas pony, after which he presented himself in similar colors.

During the night the rain ceased, and in the morning the water had receded to such an extent that we safely crossed the stream and reached my home without encountering any further difficulties. A periodical desire to sneeze asserted itself in the case of my guest, while I suffered a little from hoarseness; but apart from these minor troubles our adventurous ride left no evil effects. "When you passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," saith the Lord. We looked upon our

rescue as the fulfillment of this promise. Therefore, dear reader, let us ever commend our ways unto the Lord.

Then let my ship its course pursue
While angry storms are raging;
For Thou dost prove a helper true,
Both wind and sea assuaging.
My faithful Pilot Thou wilt be,
And Thy good Spirit leadeth me.

II. Peculiar Experiences in My Ministerial Life

1. An Unexpected Reward.

THE Educational Review, a teachers' journal published in the state of New York, recently contained an article which tells of a Suabian teacher who, during the fifty-one years and seven months of his official career, is said to have inflicted the following punishments upon his pupils: 911,527 beats with a thick stick, 124,010 with a thin stick and 20,989 with a ruler; then follow in order 136,715 raps that were administered with the bare hand and 1,118,800 cuffs applied in particular to the ears of his pupils; 777 boys were made to kneel on peas and 613 on a three-edged piece of wood; and there were 1707 pupils whom he forced to hold a stick in horizontal fashion for a certain length of time. I have my doubts as to the historical credibility of this record, and nobody will blame me for my incredulity when I add that the name of this teacher is said to have been "Hauerle" (the diminutive form of Hauer, which means hitter). But what is reported about the Suabian school teacher reminded me of an interesting experience that I wish to relate for the benefit of my readers. In our synod (as well as in some others) we pastors often are also parochial school teachers, and where a congregation is too poor to call a special teacher for its school, we do not object to assuming this additional duty and responsibility. In reality, there are congregations that could well afford to engage a teacher for their children, but hold the opinion, and do not hesitate to express it: the pastor might as well teach school during the

week, since he has to preach only on Sunday. Without any scruples of conscience, and without any feeling of sympathy, they assign the work of two men to one man and only pay the one man the salary of half a man. Who will find it strange if under such conditions the pastor is not very enthusiastic about teaching school? All this may be a little foreign to the incident I started out to relate. However, what I have written I have written, for weal or for woe, and I do not intend to retract anything. If the reader's face has by this time grown a little dark, it may be a sign that his conscience is troubling him a trifle. But I hope that his face will brighten again as I take up the thread of my narrative, with the good intention of sticking to my text.

I was one of the many pastors in our synod who taught parochial school, and I may add that I really enjoyed my work. As usual, I had all kinds of children among my pupils, large and small, willing and refractory, black-haired and flaxen-headed. One of them was a boy of 14 years, whose name was David. Like the former king of Israel in the days of his youth, this boy was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, but he was also lazy and up to all kinds of mean tricks. According to the phraseology of the Mecklenburgian Rules of Discipline, I occasionally "punished him with a little stave." One day he had again both grieved and irritated me, so I made him stay after school. I did this in order that my wrath might have time to cool down. I well remembered the advice of my former teacher in Pedagogics. He had us memorize the following lines:

Use not the rod while passion rages
And heated wrath thy mind engages;
First give thine anger time to flee,
Then punish, for then art thou free.

So after I had given my anger time to flee, David got his punishment. In passing out of the door, he remarked, "I'll tell my father about this." I had not much more than arrived at the parsonage and entered my study, when the *mother* of young David appeared on the scene. She immediately began to give vent to the pent-up emotions of her heart and declared that if I ever again punished her son (whom she characterized as *such* a good boy), she would not send him to school any more. She was not going to allow the pastor constantly to pound her child. I tried to convince her that the lad needed to be disciplined, and that she did wrong by trying to shield him, thus simply completing his ruin. Turning to the Bible, I read to her from Sirach 30: 11-12, the gist of which is contained in the familiar saying, "Spare the rod and spoil the child". But she was not to be reasoned with. The temperature of her blood had risen to the seething point. Advancing toward me until her violent gesticulations were in immediate proximity to my innocent face, she demanded, "Will you promise me never to whip my boy again?" With suppressed indignation I quietly answered, "No, I can not promise you that." Then she began to rave, "You don't know a thing about bringing up children; in fact, you are not fit to be a pastor, you—" but before she could continue any farther I had opened the door, saying in tones of icy coolness, "Please get out." Standing outside, she said a lot more, but nothing that was in accord with Philippians 4: 8, where Christians are admonished to think on "whatsoever things are lovely."

I now had time to reflect on the folly of some parents, who simply will not see what harm they do by strengthening their children in their stubborn and refractory behavior. "But," someone might ask, "did you not feel sorry for having ordered this woman to leave your house?" My reply is, "No;

with her temperature at fever heat, she needed a little fresh air."

Before long I heard another knock at the door. This time it was David's father who made his appearance. I put on the weapon of mental composure, fearing that a duel would have to be fought, in which case this weapon could do me a good turn. But the gentleman's behavior did not justify my fears. Reaching into his pocket, he drew out a new silver dollar and laid it before me on the table. The reader will believe me when I assure him that I was taken by surprise and looked at the gentleman in puzzled fashion. He anticipated my question. With his eyes directed toward the dollar, he remarked smilingly, "That is a little reward for your services. You did well in chastising my boy and giving my wife a piece of your mind." After a slight pause he continued, "We had a little dispute at home after the boy had made his complaint. I said, 'The boy needed the punishment, or it wouldn't have been meted out to him.' But my wife was very much excited and made up her mind to go and speak to you about the matter; nothing could keep her back. When she returned a moment ago and told me what had happened, I said, 'Now I will go to see the pastor,' and my wife was not only willing to have me see you, but even urged me to do so; but—" and here he smiled just a little maliciously—"she thought I would also take you to task for having done your plain duty. That, of course, is not at all my intention. I simply would ask you not to mind what my wife has said and to treat my boy as if he were yours. I imagine," said he in conclusion, "my better half will not come to you a second time." Having shaken hands with me, he made his departure. It took me some time to get over my surprise at this new turn of affairs. The reader will probably agree with me when I say, "That was a wise father." At the same time I must con-

fess that until now this is the only time that I received payment for *such* an official act. The father's request was duly heeded. I treated his boy as I would have treated my own when he deserved punishment, and I had the satisfaction of seeing a change in him. Occasionally, his old habits would creep out, but on the whole I could be satisfied with his behavior.

Before his confirmation he came to beg my pardon for all the aggravation that he might have caused me, making special mention of the occurrence here related. As he told me, he did it partly on his own initiative, and partly upon the advice of his mother. Needless to say that my pardon was willingly granted. For all parents, this story contains a noteworthy lesson, which they will easily discover without my pointing it out to them.

2. A Wholesome Lesson.

In the early days of my ministry, I once sat at the sick-bed of a young woman who was a sincere disciple of Jesus. While still very young, she had learned to love Him by coming in contact with truly believing Christians, and later all kinds of tribulations had served to bring her into still closer communion with Him. For years she had been a bed-ridden sufferer, her husband was given to fits of temper, she had all kinds of care on account of her children, and there were many other things to increase the weight of her burden. Verily, if she had loudly and pitiously complained about the many and grievous ills that she had to bear, I should not have considered it strange. Sometimes I indeed found her with tear-dimmed eyes, but never did I hear a complaint from her lips. Herself a crossbearer, she had found rest in the shadow of the cross of Jesus. Actuated by feelings of sympathy, I sometimes expressed my regret at the disheartening sameness of her con-

dition, which seemed to preclude even the faintest hope of a change for the better. On such occasions she would refer to the woman spoken of in the ninth chapter of Matthew, a woman who had been sick for twelve years before she gained relief at the hands of the Master. Then, too, she comforted herself by alluding to the man who had waited at the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years before his deliverance came. With an unshaken faith she clung to Him who also said to her, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How often she prayed these words of her favorite hymn:

"Happy days have I been granted
From above—God of love,
Be Thy praises chanted!
For, when evils come depressing,
In the end Thou dost lend
For each woe a blessing."

I may say that I found the periodical visits that I paid this sick woman to be highly edifying and instructive. Indeed, I learned of her in many ways. At the same time I must confess that among the sick whom I visited during my later ministry I never again found such a child of peace. In her the Savior had actually taken form. Willingly she followed Christ on the way of the cross, nor did she shrink from staying with Him when her way led through deep waters (Psalm 89:3). What prompted me to devote the present chapter to this sick woman, was a peculiar talk that I had with her incidental to one of my regular visits. Beside her bed stood a cradle in which her infant grandchild was lying. Turning her eyes toward this cradle, she remarked, "If these little ones only could walk right after they are born, but their helplessness *is also due to unbelief.*" I reflected for a while, but could not think of any reason why this sick lady should find a logical connection between unbelief and the inability of

little children to walk right after birth, as some of the lower animals do. Therefore I asked her how she had come to such a conclusion. "Why," said she, "that is written in the Bible." "In what part of the Bible?" I inquired. "Well," she replied, "have you never read that after Eve had given birth to Cain God said to her, 'Let him run!' but Eve answered, 'O no, my Lord, he will fall!' and that because she was not obedient to the word of the Lord, God decreed that Cain and all other children that came into the world should have to be held and carried for a time, as a lasting reminder of the unbelief manifested by Eve, the mother of us all?" "Is this story really written in the Bible?" I asked in surprise. "Yes, most assuredly," she answered, and from the tone of her voice I could tell that she was surprised to think that I, though a pastor, knew nothing of this Biblical story.

I must admit that I still had my doubts as to whether this good woman was right in her contention, but since she, the experienced disciple of Jesus, had a much more intimate knowledge of the Bible than I, a comparatively inexperienced young minister, and since she seemed to be so absolutely sure of her ground, I asked her to look up the passage of Scripture in which her story was recorded. She was ready at once to comply with my request, but could not find the passage she was looking for, so she promised to have it looked up for me by the time I should visit her again.

I started for home, and what does the dear reader suppose I did as soon as I had access to my study? Indeed, I immediately reached for my Bible. But did I not thus admit the possibility that the story in question could be found somewhere in the Scriptures? Perhaps, if I answer this question in the affirmative, some of my readers will consider me a very poor Bible student. However, I will admit that I actually

believed I might find the story somewhere in the Apocryphal Books. So I began to read these Apocrypha, which are contained in most German Bibles between the Old and the New Testaments. Not finding the story there, I was positively convinced that the dear sick woman must be mistaken. When I paid her my next visit, she indeed called to me as soon as I had entered the door, "I really did not find it." Very likely the story is an old legend which she had read somewhere, and since the Bible and the hymn book were her constant companions, she imagined having come across the legend somewhere in the Bible.

"And this is what you call a wholesome lesson?" I hear someone ask. My reply is, "Why not?" For me it was such a lesson in various respects. In the first place, I had heard an explanation for the inability of children to walk right after their birth, an explanation which at least appeals to our religious sensibilities. In the second place, the whole occurrence proved to be an impetus for me to study the Apocrypha, which Luther pronounced good and profitable reading. In the third place, I also was prompted, in this connection, to read all the other books of the Bible with care, and thus, in the fourth place, I was able to answer many a puzzling question that was put to me in those days, with a view to testing my versatility in the Scriptures.

To that dear sick woman I am indebted for having followed Paul's advice to Timothy, "Give attendance to reading." Without the knowledge of the Scriptures thus acquired, I should often have felt humiliated by being compelled to confess my ignorance. And if among my readers there should be such who henceforth will obey the Pauline words recorded in 1. Timothy 4:13, this story will be a wholesome lesson also for them.

3. A Burial in the Dead of Night.

It was on a very cold day in January. A sharp wind swept the roads, so that, except in a few hollow places, nothing could be seen of the snow that had fallen the night before. I sat beside the stove, which radiated a most agreeable warmth, and I considered myself fortunate for not being obliged to go outside in such cold and stormy weather. To view a snow storm through the window of a comfortably heated room, furnishes pleasant entertainment, nor are the various sounds of the wind without "music that gentlier on the spirit lies than tired eyelids upon tired eyes." While thus comfortably seated beside the warm stove, watching the wintry scenes through the window of my room, my attention was attracted by a team that was slowly moving along, and I began to wonder why the driver of that team had left his house in such inclement weather. I was soon to find out the reason. The teamster brought his horses to a standstill before my house, there was a rap at the door, and in stepped a man who, although he wore a sheepskin coat, looked half frozen. Stranger though he was, he greeted me in the most friendly terms, saying, "Good morning, Pastor Augustin." After he had expressed his sentiments regarding the weather, largely in terms of complaint, I asked him, "What is your name?" "Why, don't you know me?" he said in surprise: "I am (the) Ochs of B. County." His answer to my question did not impress me so peculiarly as it doubtless has impressed my readers; for in those regions there existed a widely scattered family that went by the ominous name Ochs. In order to distinguish the different branches of that family from one another, the name Ochs was used with various modifying terms. Since one of the family in question owned a sheep ranch, he was called Schafochs; another was designated as the little Ochs; a third was characterized as the fat Ochs, and

so on. Having found out the man's name, I asked him, "What brought you here today?" "O," said he, "I have come to get you to conduct a funeral. My sister-in-law has died," he explained, "and she is to be buried today." "How far is it from here?" I asked. "About eighteen miles," he replied. "I started out yesterday in order to be here today at an early hour, and now it is almost noon after all."

Realizing that there was no time to lose, I hurriedly gathered what things I needed, and in a few minutes I was ready to leave. With a look of regret at my warm stove, I left the parsonage and climbed into my seat on the wagon. The seat was nothing but a plain board laid across the wagon box. The horses, as I soon discovered, were just the kind that one would need in a slowly moving funeral procession. We made frightfully slow headway. If the man had only touched his horses up a little with the whip that he had so near at hand! But the whip was in its socket purely for ornamental purposes.

Consigning myself to my fate, I made a few inquiries about the deceased and tried to collect my thoughts for the funeral address. Soon I began to feel wretchedly cold, so I alighted from the wagon and walked a distance to accelerate the circulation of my blood. This same maneuver was repeated ever so often in the course of the day. My coachman was the personfication of stolidity; more than fifteen times he stopped the team in order to light his pipe, and when I ventured to offer a word of gentle remonstrance, saying that we must hurry a little in order not to be too late for the funeral, he quietly replied, "They are bound to wait until we arrive; they can't do anything without the minister." So I had to possess my soul in patience.

As the saying goes, there are times when patience ceases to be a virtue. At any rate, the thread of my patience snapped,

and I forthwith grew impatient. Seized with an irresistible longing to "speed up" a trifle, I pulled the whip out of its socket and vigorously applied it to the horses, fully expecting the most beneficial results. But instead of changing their slow walk to a brisk trot, they came to a complete standstill. My coachman laughed and said, "You see, now we shall arrive at our destination still later." Various manipulations were needed to start the horses again. It began to grow dark, and we were still far away from our goal.

By the time we reached the farm toward which we had been all too slowly wending, the sun had long disappeared from the horizon and gone to rest for the night. The people who had assembled to attend the funeral had actually waited until we finally made our appearance. The house being small, most of the people had been compelled to stand out in the yard, so that they were almost as frozen as we were after our long and desperately slow ride.—The body of the deceased woman was now brought out into the open, and by the light of a stable lantern I delivered my funeral discourse. All the while, I was so cold that I could hardly stand still. Shivering all over like an aspen leaf, I spoke for about ten minutes. When I had finished, the funeral procession was formed. My former coachman was the one whom they had chosen to convey the corpse to the cemetery. In compliance with the prevailing custom, I was seated in the same conveyance. I had hoped that there might be a change of horses, but when I suggested this to my coachman he replied, "O no, I always have to take the corpse when we have a funeral, my horses are thoroughly dependable, nothing ever happens in the way of an accident when I head the procession with my team. That the horses were dependable, I had already noticed; slowly but surely they took us to the cemetery, which was about three miles away. We were right in the dead of night.

It was so dark that when we reached the cemetery the people groped about for some time until they found the gate, and they had to search even more zealously to find the new grave. Instead of seeing our way, we had to feel it. At last we were assembled around the sepulchre, and I recited the burial service. A peculiar sensation took possession of me when I conducted this commitment and heard my voice resounding through the cold midnight air, with only the shadows of the mourners before me. Nor was the customary hymn that the people sang of a less peculiar effect.

Usually, I had to deliver a sermon at the house or church and a funeral address at the grave. Under the circumstances, I felt justified in omitting the address, but later I heard that this had offended the people and some even claimed that the woman had not been properly buried. After the burial service had been brought to a close, I inquired in a loud tone of voice, "Where is the man whose house is nearest to this cemetery?" From the dark mass of humanity came the response, "Here!" "Very well," said I, "take me along." (Some of my brethren in the ministry may consider this mode of procedure quite unliturgical; but my physical condition was such that I felt justified in choosing the most effective way of accomplishing my aim.) So I climbed into this man's wagon, and before long I was seated beside the warm stove; but it took some time before I had my shivering body under control.—Never will I forget that burial in the dead of night.

4. A True Israelite.

We know that our Lord and Master did not only speak to the multitudes, but also conversed with people individually, in order to show them the way of life, thus being able to deal with them according to their peculiar needs and difficulties. The apostles followed His steps, inasmuch as they also en-

deavored to win souls both by the public preaching of the Gospel and by talking to people individually about the one thing that is needful. Accordingly, we ministers of the Word today have the twofold duty of preaching the Gospel in public and applying it to the needs of individual souls in private conversation. For the latter type of pastoral work, times of sickness often furnish the occasion. It is no uncommon occurrence that we are called to the bedside of people who had assumed an attitude of indifference or even hostility toward the church and its ministry. This may be regarded as an unmistakable sign that one can not wholly drown the voice of conscience. In the face of death, the slumbering accuser will awake like a fierce lion, and people are prompted to send for the pastor, although it may cause them no little effort to overcome the opposition of their carnal nature. Often this is done too late; but sometimes a pastor succeeds in the attempt to rescue a human soul when its time of grace is almost spent.

When a pastor is called to a sickbed, he sometimes has very peculiar cases to deal with. Just recently, one of my brethren in the ministry was asked to visit a sick man who wanted to take the Lord's Supper. He had never seen this man in his church, nor had he any sort of acquaintance with him. But he responded to his wish and paid him a pastoral visit. On entering the sickroom, he beheld a man who was about forty years old, and who impressed him as being very seriously ill. After a word of friendly greeting, the pastor addressed the sick man as follows: "You wish to have Communion; since we do not know each other, you will allow me to ask you a few questions. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you believe that He also bore your sins and made atonement for them by His death upon the cross?" "No," replied the sick man, "I do not believe that, and I don't think

you will expect such a thing of me." "Then I can not understand," observed the pastor, "why you should want to take the Lord's Supper, nor dare I offer it to you as an unbeliever; but perhaps you would like to have me pray for you?" "Oh no," said he, "I am too tenderhearted for that; whenever I read Schiller or Goethe, I was moved to tears, and I am afraid it would also cause me to weep if you offered prayer at my bedside." The pastor took him up on this and remarked, "It would be a good thing for you to shed tears, but they should be tears of repentance called forth by the memory of your godless life." "No, pastor," begged the sick man, "please spare me the strain; it would do no good anyway." This was the pastor's first visit, but not his last one. Later, he was able to report that this patient had departed in peace, having come to believe in Jesus as His Savior. He had realized that guilt is the greatest of all evils, and so he was prepared to receive the greatest of all good gifts, even the forgiveness of his sins.

One evening I also was called to the bedside of a very sick man. While I had been informed of his living within the boundaries of my parish, I had never seen him at church or anywhere else. I entered the room where this man was lying and expressed my regret for not having met him sooner and not having called on him, although I did not know that he was a member of the Lutheran church. "Yes," said he, "I am a Lutheran. I know that I am about to die; I have put my house in order, and I have sent for you to ask you whether you will be willing to preach my funeral sermon and officiate at my burial." I evaded his question for the time being and drew a little closer to him for a confidential talk. I asked him about the condition of his inner life, and encouraged him to express himself regarding the subject of his salvation. "I have not gone to church lately," he said, "my bodily infirmi-

ties would not permit this. But I have the assurance that after leaving this present world I shall find a place of habitation in the better beyond. My confession is that of the psalmist: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." Noticing that he quoted the psalmist in words differing somewhat from those of the German translation, I called his attention to the fact. He remarked, "I quote the psalmist by translating from the Hebrew version of the Bible; in fact, I prefer to pray in the Hebrew language." In a spirit of real devotion he then prayed the twenty third Psalm in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament. A spell of weakness that momentarily deprived him of the power of speech, prevented me from continuing my conversation with the sick man. To all appearances, he lay there in an unconscious state, and as I looked at him more closely, I detected the type of face peculiar to all the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. As I returned home, I could not get rid of the idea, "This man is an Israelite." In order to reassure myself as to the correctness of my surmise, I visited the sick man again the very next morning. I found him exceedingly weak, but he was able to converse with me. Without beating about the bush, I told him, "I couldn't go to sleep last night because my mind was kept busy with the thought that you must be an Israelite. It seldom happens that a Christian who is not of Jewish extraction can read and even pray in Hebrew."

I had not been mistaken. The patient frankly admitted, "Yes, and you might have added that my features betray the fact of my belonging to the descendants of Abraham. I am indeed the son of Jewish parents, and for a long time was a Jew also in point of religion. Nevertheless, I told you the truth by maintaining that I was a Lutheran. I received Chris-

tian Baptism at the hands of a missionary in the city of Warsaw and then and there became a member of the Evangelical Lutheran church. But in order to relieve you of all doubt, I am willing to take on oath. Will you have me do this?" I did not deem it necessary to have him bear testimony of his conversion under oath, but only requested him to testify of his faith by reciting the Apostles' Creed. With a loud voice he confessed the three articles of this creed, closing with the words, "In this faith I will die—even today." He fell back upon his pillow, and I thought he had passed away. But he rallied once more. I was able, upon his request, to give him Communion. The end came a little later, and his soul, as I hope, was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. He was a true Israelite in whom there was no guile. I preached his funeral sermon from Psalm 23:4.

5. A Wedding.

I offer no apologies for taking the reader from a sickbed and death chamber to a joyous wedding party. Life is made up of joy and sorrow, the two often being very closely allied with each other. Before I had been in my first parish very long, a man came to me and said quite mysteriously, "My son will soon be married; he has been there already." The latter clause, "he has been there already," was not intelligible to me, so I asked, "Where has he been?" "At his future father-in-law's," he replied. I could not suppress the question, "Is he then going to marry him?" "No," said my caller with a jolly laugh, "but here the custom prevails that when a young man wants to marry he pays his future father-in-law a visit. If he does this quite alone, the significance of his visit is plainly understood, and if the host is pleasant to his visitor, the outlook is hopeful." "But what of the bride?" I asked. "She finds out everything from her father and from the one who

speaks for the young man.” To this explanation the man added, “In the present instance, I am the one who is going to speak for my son, and make arrangements for everything.” Well, he went, and he must have had smooth sailing, because the very next day the bridal couple presented itself and asked me to publish the bans. I was glad to find this custom prevalent in my congregation, and later I often regretted that it is not observed in all congregations. How often it happens that young people are married secretly, so much so, that not even their own parents are in a position to know anything about it! Young people of our own congregations have also caught the contagion. To keep the disease from spreading, it would be a good thing to introduce the custom of publishing the bans, that is, the custom of having the proposed marriage announced in church several weeks in advance. Not only would this do away with the objectionable secrecy and give any person an opportunity to object in case that he knows of any impediment to the proposed marriage, but the congregation would also offer prayer for the young people who intend to enter the holy estate of matrimony. In my first parish this custom was upheld, and another custom was observed there which likewise deserves to be imitated. The Pastor examined the bridal couple in the five parts of the Catechism, in order to ascertain whether they were conversant with the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine. Many a young man and his fiancée were thus prompted thoroughly to review the Catechism, in order that they might acquit themselves with credit in the customary test. Being a lenient examiner, I never “flunked” a young couple, but I consistently gave the examination, as required by the custom prevailing in my first parish. What do my readers think of this custom? I know the ministers will be sure to say, “Yes, it would indeed be a fine thing if such a custom could be generally intro-

duced." The young people are probably glad that it does not prevail everywhere. And yet, if one's journey through life is to be attended by God's grace and blessing, he must have communion with Him, and live in conformity with the Christian doctrines, as they are summarized in Luther's excellent smaller Catechism.

The bridal couple here in question passed the catechetical examination with credit, and the time of the wedding was determined. At the appointed hour I went to the church and awaited the bridal party. In my first parish it never happened that I was asked to solemnize a marriage in a private home, as is so frequently the case at the present time. It was as it should be, the whole congregation attended the marriage service, and it was without exception conducted in church. I did not have to wait long for the arrival of the people concerned. It was a regular wedding procession, and it moved along at lightning speed. Several men on horseback were in the lead. They were followed by half a dozen wagons which conveyed the wedding party proper. From afar one could hear the shouts of the young men and the reports of the pistols which were discharged in honor of the occasion.

All was quiet, however, when the procession arrived at the church. The bridal couple entered the house of God. It was a unique sight for a stranger. The bride appeared in a light blue dress; upon her head she wore a wreath of white and red paper roses, and to this wreath were fastened an almost countless lot of silk ribbons, representing all the colors imaginable. The bridegroom had on a black suit of clothes, and upon his breast he wore a bouquet of such dimensions that at least five could have been made of it, each one sufficiently large for the occasion; from the bouquet streamed the same number of ribbons that decorated the bride. After the marriage ceremony had been performed in church, I accom-

panied the bridal party to the house where the marriage feast was to be held. When we, the bridal couple and I, entered the house, we were received by three musicians who played the strains of the hymn:

"I and my house are ready, Lord,
To serve Thee, and obey Thy word."

The wedding dinner was served, and I was wondering what further developments might be expected. I had revived in my mind a number of stories which I intended to relate at the opportune time, partly to entertain the guests, partly to drive home a few salient truths. But something happened which took me completely by surprise. Hardly had we finished eating dinner, when the head of the house came to me and said with the most friendly mien imaginable, "Pastor, the horses are hitched up." So they were anxious to get rid of me. In an aggravated state of mind I climbed on the wagon, and on the way home I told my coachman how indignant I was at the treatment I had received. He told me that in the old country the pastor always took his departure right after the wedding dinner had been served, and he believed that to be the regular order of things. The matter came upon me all too suddenly, and being new in the congregation I was not prepared to meet the situation; but of one thing I was sure: I would not let them take me home so unceremoniously a second time.

Another wedding soon followed, but when the usual announcement was made that the horses were hitched up, I very dryly remarked, "You might as well unhitch them again; I intend to stay here a little longer." The head of the house looked somewhat puzzled for a while, but he acted upon my suggestion. As I sat among the people, I had a fine opportunity for saying a few things for which the pulpit does not

seem to be the proper place. Later, I had the satisfaction of being obliged at times fairly to demand that the horses be hitched up to take me home from the wedding.

Just another remark in conclusion. The matrimonial relations of the people in my first parish were, as a rule, very amicable. There existed very little strife in the homes of the people, and cases of divorce were unknown among them. They believed in the sanctity of marriage, regarding it as a covenant which obligates husband and wife to be mutually faithful until God Himself severs their marital relations. Nor will the divorce evil cease to flourish until the words of Joshua become the motto of every home: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

6. A Singular Confession.

Parsonages are a great convenience for all kinds of vagrant people. Every pastor will easily recall any number of strange visitors who in the course of time called at his house. Teachers from Germany who either gave up teaching or were compelled to give it up; pastors who are without a congregation and who for the time being would gladly teach school; merchants who have met with misfortune in their business and lost everything; laborers who at some distant place have a large family to support; collectors, even such as hail from Africa and Asia Minor, with a mass of documents in all kinds of languages; barons and counts who for a time fared sumptuously every day and now, deprived of all means of support, are unwilling to work—all these find their way to the pastor. Why do they call at his door? Doubtless, they believe him to be a man of sympathetic tendencies, who will not refuse them shelter for the night. He is supposed to act upon the Scriptural injunction, "Be hospitable without murmuring." Nor may he be expected to set aside that other Scriptural saying,

“To give is more blessed than to receive.” These are among the reasons why such people are prone to make their appeal to the clerical profession. For if they haven’t medicines, books and pictures to offer for sale, they without exception want a little help in their financial embarrassment.

Among the many itinerant visitors that I have had since I have been in the ministry, there is one whom I remember especially well, and about whom I would like to talk to you.—It was on a Sunday afternoon in the month of February. I had just baptized a sick child and was returning to the parsonage. In front of the door stood a young man, fairly well clad, and waiting for me. He gave me his name and asked for the privilege of speaking to me in private. We went into my study, and there he made a singular confession, one that deeply stirred my soul.

“Out in Germany,” he began, “I proved guilty of a grave misdemeanor, which greatly incensed my father and prompted him to disown me. I have reason to believe that my father, who was director of the Gymnasium at G., would not have taken this step if I only had begged his pardon. However, treating the matter lightly, I did not ask his forgiveness, but left Germany and came to America. Being a philologist and fully conversant with a number of languages, I did not doubt for a moment that I should soon find a position. To my sorrow, I was greatly disappointed. There wasn’t a soul that showed any concern for me. In order that I might not starve to death, I earned a little money by doing the most menial kinds of work. In New York I washed dishes at an hotel, in Chicago I swept the streets for a while, I also worked on the railroad as a section hand. Such a life I found to be unbearable, and repeatedly the thought of ending my miserable existence suggested itself to me. I fought against this thought

for some time, but one day the devil had brought me to the verge of despair, and I was at the point of committing suicide.

"In His grace, however, God did not let it come to that. While on my way to the place where I had determined to commit the deed of self-destruction, I passed by a church. With an irresistible force something within moved me to enter this house of God. Once more I was going to attend a divine service, and then take the leap into eternity. I sat down in the pew that was farthest toward the back, and an aged woman handed me a hymn book."

Tears were running down his cheeks by the time he had arrived at this juncture in his confession. He seemed to be overcome with emotion, and it took quite a while before he continued, saying, "The congregation was just singing the fifth stanza of the hymn, 'If Thou but suffer God to guide Thee':

'Think not, when in the stress of trial,
That God hath cast thee off unheard,
That he whose hopes meet no denial
Must surely be of God preferred;
God never will forsake in need
The heart that trusts in Him indeed.'

The pastor also began his sermon with these words. It really seemed as if he were preaching only for my benefit. Every sentence went straight to my heart. That evening I experienced the power of God's word, and with tears I vowed that I would turn a new leaf in the book of my life. Before the night was over, I wrote a letter to my father, confessing my sin and pleading with him to grant me forgiveness. I also inquired whether I could dare to return home. It may also be said of me, 'He was dead and is alive again.' "

In reply to my question as to how long ago it was that he had written to his father, he said, "I am on my way to

St. Paul, where I hope to find a letter from my father waiting for me. I have no money, but I have walked this far, and shall also walk the rest of the way. Arriving here today, I thought I would look up the German minister; for I know that men of your profession best understand my present state of mind." All this he said in such a way that I received the impression: Here there is one in whom the Spirit of God is at work. How openly he confessed his sin, making no attempt whatsoever to shield himself! I could not but think that God had deeply humbled him. I tried my best to comfort him, and although he had not asked for pecuniary aid, my heart could not bear to let him walk to St. Paul without money, the cold being very intense at that, so I slipped a few dollars into his hand. With tears in his eyes, he thanked me in the most fitting terms, wishing me the blessing and reward of God for my kindness to him, and thus we parted.

A few days later, I chanced to meet a Catholic priest; we knew each other, and since we were traveling in the same direction, we both occupied the same seat. In the course of our conversation I told him of that singular case of confession. He quietly waited until I had finished relating the case, and then, to my utter amazement, he told me that the same gentleman had also been at his place and related the same story, though with a Catholic coloring; thus, the church that the man entered was a Catholic church, and when he finally wished him the blessing of Almighty God, he added to this the blessing of the holy virgin and the dear saints.—

"What do you say to this?" I exclaimed. "Evidently, we have both been swindled." "Yes," said he, "I also realize that now. We are minus the money we gave him. It is a lesson for us, however, to exercise precaution in the future." To think that such a swindler should have succeeded in

winning my sympathy, and even in coaxing money out of my pocket, by affecting such seemingly genuine tears of repentance and making such a soul-moving confession of his guilt! I grew real angry; for a pastor also grows angry under strong provocation, and the dear reader will doubtless consider it justified in the present instance. So I was to use precaution in the future. But how? Should I, for all time to come, admit none of these "brethren of the street" to enter my house? Should I forever refuse to lend any of them pecuniary aid? Were the innocent to suffer with the guilty? "No," said I, "let them come; *one* sad experience shall not make me lose faith in *all* men." My motto is that of Karl Gerok:

Though on a knave my bread were wasted,
I will not be a misanthrope,
Though base ingratitude I oft have tasted,
I still have hope.

7. A Blessed Death.

I do not know whether all my brethren in the ministry have the same experience, but I always have a sense of elation when the time arrives for giving religious instruction to my confirmation class. One takes a keen delight in seeing before him a group of young people whom he is to show the way of life and love. In the days of youth the heart is far more receptive than in later years. The greater number of young boys and girls that have joined the catechetical class eagerly absorb the blessed truths expounded to them by their pastor. To be sure, there are exceptions. In this respect I also have a tale to tell. But I forbear. My purpose is to relate an instance which may serve to illustrate the blessed influence of catechetical instruction upon the youthful mind.

Among my confirmands there was a young girl by the name of Anna. During instruction, she was the most at-

tentive one in the class, as well as the one who gave the most intelligent answers to my questions. She had been reared in a Christian home, where family devotions belonged to the regular order of the day, and enjoyed the advantage of possessing Christian parents, in whose hearts pulsed the new life of faith in the Savior. Withal, she was rather strongly inclined to be proud and to cultivate a feeling of self-esteem. One day I had taken occasion to speak of false pride and its baneful consequences. In doing so, I must have touched a responsive cord in her heart; for at the close of the hour she remained to have a private talk with me. "Pastor," said she, "I believe I am one of the proud. At times when I had recited better or given more intelligent answers than the other members of the class, I harbored the thought of being indeed very much superior to them. How can I get rid of this false pride? I would like so much to be humble." I told her that she would have to ask the Savior to give her an humble heart, He alone being able to purge the heart of all false pride and endow it with true humility. I prayed with her, after which she went home.

During the weeks that followed, Anna was very quiet and reflective. One could tell by her whole demeanor that her inner life was the all-absorbing subject of her thoughts. One evening her father called at the parsonage and informed me that Anna was sick with inflammation of the lungs. The days which followed were days of blessing. At the bedside of this sick confirmand, I had occasion to see that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed a power of God unto salvation. Said she, "I have often prayed to God for an humble heart. The Lord has heard my prayer; but now He is going to take me unto Himself, in order that I may not relapse into a state of false pride." We did not think that she was so near the brink of death. However, Anna's premonition did not de-

ceive her. The end was fast approaching. "I am with the Savior," she remarked at another time, "and soon I shall be with Him forever." "Are you not afraid of death?" I asked. "No," was her joyful reply, "presently I shall be with Him in Paradise." "What is it that gives you this blessed assurance?" I inquired. She answered my question by citing the following lines from a hymn that she had committed to memory:

"I build on this foundation
That Jesus and His blood
Alone are my salvation,
My true, eternal good."

I gave her Holy Communion. O that was a solemn moment, and withal so fraught with peace, when upon her dying bed she took the confirmation vow and then received the body and blood of Christ to gain strength for her last journey, leading through the dark valley of the shadow of death. In the arms of her mother, and supported by our prayers, she fell asleep in this world, only to awake again in the brighter and better world beyond. I could not help thinking, "If only all of my confirmands would thus depart in peace when the hour of death shall also arrive for them!" My thoughts upon that occasion shaped themselves into a hymn, which I take the liberty of quoting for the benefit of my dear readers, whom it may put in mind of their own confirmation.

Dost thou recall
The moments so endearing,
When at the altar thou with heart and hand
Didst pledge thyself, no harm or evil fearing,
To walk with Jesus to the fatherland?
Dost thou recall?

Dost thou recall
How sacred fire was burning

Upon the altar of thy loving heart?
And how to Jesus thou wast fondly turning,
Whose love to thee doth wondrous joy impart?
Dost thou recall?

Dost thou recall
How then in holy blessing
Thy shepherd's hands upon thy head were laid?
And how in accents tender and caressing
'He for thy loyalty to Jesus prayed?
Dost thou recall?

Dost thou recall
The moment so appealing
When thou didst vow to serve the Lord for life,
And, all the glory of thy Savior feeling,
Thou wast prepared for every storm and strife?
Dost thou recall?

Yes, do recall
Those moments every morning,
Do not forget them, nor thy love displace;
With thoughts of Jesus heart and soul adorning,
Recall each day His covenant of grace.
Yes, do recall.

III. People Whom I Have Met

If a pilgrim or a stranger
Thou shouldst meet on life's rough way,
Do not hesitate to greet him,
Whether warm or cold the day;
Then, if thou shouldst find him erring,
If endangered be his soul,
Try the proper way to lead him,
If to thee is known the goal.

THE lines which I have just quoted give expression to thoughts that have often passed through my mind on life's journey. Daily we come into contact with all kinds of people, including those who have the strangest views on subjects of a religious nature. In many instances, we, as Christians, could do valuable mission work by a word fitly spoken, which, as Solomon says, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. The only thing that prevents us from rendering such service may be our slothfulness. We are too easy-going to perform our plain duty in the way of directing the feet of our erring brethren into the paths of righteousness. A venerable church father says, "The soul that would be admitted to heaven must bring at least one other soul along." And if we only know the goal, and are safely on the road that leads to it, it will be an easy matter for us to take some other person by the hand and to give out the watchword, "We march to Canaan above!" On the other hand, it also frequently happens that we ourselves are approached by people who aim to entice us away from the narrow path.—During my earthly pilgrimage I have met the most varied types of people. In this respect, I can with ease

recall all kinds of echoes from the caverns of memory. Some may be more remote than others, but all are of interest to me, and I hope that my readers may likewise take a measure of interest in the few reminiscences here given for their benefit.

1. He Shook Off the Very Dust from His Feet.

It was vacation time. The different institutions of learning in our country had closed their doors, and the inmates of these seats of learning were to enjoy a season of very much needed rest. For the first time in my life, the time of vacation brought me no rest, but a dear student friend paid me a most welcome visit. He came to spend several months with me in my humble dwelling. I shall call him Truegold, and I shall do this in order to express the fact that he proved to be a most loyal friend, his loyalty having remained firm and unshaken to this very day. His presence brought a welcome variation into the monotonous bachelor's life that I was leading at the time. We read and studied together, we joked and sang, we made visits and engaged in serious conversation, as the spirit moved us. In keeping house, we took turns about. Of course, the one found fault with the other; but whenever the playful chicanery threatened to develop into anything very serious, we called at our neighbor's and asked his wife to cook us a decent meal.

One day we were engaged in a lively conversation, the subject matter of which was a horseback ride that we had taken the day before. The unique feature of this ride was that Truegold and I both sat on one and the same horse. It was the only horse that we had at our disposal. My friend was at first riding alone, while I walked along beside him. But we came to a wide creek, and since I did not feel disposed to wade through it, I also climbed upon the horse's back, taking my seat back of Truegold. In my hand I carefully held a napkin into which a good woman had put some eggs to restock my

pantry. Whether the horse became refractory because of the double load it had to bear, or whether it simply wanted to play us a trick, I am not able to decide. But suddenly it increased its speed until it ran along in full gallop. I sat there in a cramped position, nervously clinging to my friend in front of me. At last he had the irritated animal under control. The eggs had by this time been beaten into a veritable egg soup.

This escapade, then, was the subject-matter of the happy conversation in which my friend Truegold and I were engaged, when we saw two men of semi-clerical appearance directing their footsteps toward the parsonage. The door was open, and the two strangers crossed the threshold. Without saying a word, they stood there a while and looked at us. I asked them, "Who are you and what do you want?" Their reply was, "We are Adventists from M. County, and we want to ask you whether we can have the use of your church for a divine service." These brethren of the side line are often very intrusive and, like wolves, break into the herd stealthily. Such wayfaring men already gave trouble to the apostle Paul. He earnestly warns the Christians against men of this type, that creep into houses to capture the unwary (2. Timothy 3:6). Many a time have well regulated Lutheran congregations been greatly injured by such intruders. These two men were not the most dangerous of their sort, inasmuch as they at least came to ask for my permission before going about their work.

"Do you believe," I asked, "that we Lutherans can be saved by our type of the Christian faith?" One of the two gentlemen, whom I will call "Mercurius" because he was the chief speaker, replied, "Yes, we believe that." "Then," said I, "it is not quite clear to me why you should want to preach in my church." He went on to say, "Some Christians have received more light than others; we Adventists have a greater

measure of truth in some things, for instance, concerning Sabbath observance, the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of the Antichrist and other points of doctrine. Therefore, since we are concerned about your spiritual welfare, we should like to deepen your knowledge of these Christian truths. Take, first of all, your erroneous keeping of the Sabbath day. Surely, you must admit that God for all time instituted the seventh, and not the first day of the week as the weekly day of rest. Sunday is a pagan holiday, instituted in honor of the heathen sun god, and all who observe Sunday have in this particular reverted to paganism."

At this juncture, my friend Truegold checked the flood of oratory by asking the question, "From what source did you gain the information that Sunday is of pagan origin?" Mercurius answered, "Thus it is written in the Latin and Greek authors." Now, my friend Truegold was well versed in the ancient writings of Greece and Rome; these Adventists had heard the bells ring, but did not know where they were mounted. They could make assertions, but were not able to prove them. My friend therefore came to lead in the conversation, naturally assuming the role of an instructor, showing to the dot that the Christians, living under the New Covenant, have a perfect right to observe Sunday as a day of rest and worship, proving from the Scriptures, as well as from the oldest writings of the Church Fathers, that Sunday observance dates back to the very earliest Christian congregations. To be sure, he was none too gentle with the loquacious Mercurius, and more than once I had to admonish him to be a little less violent in his utterances and to evince a spirit of meekness in pointing out to these people the truth regarding the questions at issue. Hardly had I finished telling all this to my friend, when "Jupiter," the second of the two Adventist speakers, emerged from his deep silence and said, "We do not need to be

taught in these matters; we are on the right way. Come," he called to his partner, "it is of no use for us to bear witness unto the truth here, in the presence of these men." My friend Truegold withdrew from the conflict of words in a belligerent mood and permitted his opponents to pass out of the door unnoticed. As for me, I accompanied them a short distance. "We shall not preach here now," said Mercurius, "although it is necessary that your congregation, too, should be enlightened. It should learn to know that it is not right to eat the flesh of swine, that there is no such thing as inherent immortality, that the Revelation of St. John must be preached, and that the law concerning tithes is still in force. But, as I have observed, we are not going to preach here for the present. We shall come again, however, in about six weeks, in the hope that until then you will have grown in love sufficiently to be willing to place your church at our disposal."

"As men I love you even now," I replied, "and I only regret that you have permitted yourselves to be caught in the meshes of Adventism, with its many grave and dangerous errors. However, as Adventists I do not love you. I look upon you as wolves, and shall consider it my duty to wage war against you to the finish. As a shepherd, I owe this to the flock committed to my charge." In giving vent to these words, I must have looked rather fierce, showing my opponents that I meant business. At any rate, they manifested no inclination to exchange any more words with me on the topics which were of such absorbing interest to them. Taking "Jupiter" by the arm, "Mercurius" said to him, "Come, with the one in there (Truegold) we can't accomplish anything, and the one out here (he meant me) also does not grow in love." Then he turned toward me and, accompanying his words with the corresponding movements of his feet, made bold to say, "We shake the very dust off our feet for a testimony against you."

2. Mr. Pfalzgraf.

One day I was seated at my desk studying "Distinctive Doctrines." Here in America there are so many denominations that one has to do no little studying if he would be informed on the doctrinal differences of these various churches and sects. Were it not for the comforting words of the Master, "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd," we might despair of ultimate church unity in view of the many divisions that exist in the Christian Church, and the battle of words that is waged in our own Lutheran camp. For purposes of orientation, I found it very profitable to read Pastor Rohnert's little book on "Kirche, Kirchen und Sekten." On the day of which I intend to speak, I was busy reading this little manual. The Otterbein people and the Weinbrennerians were receiving my attention at the time. These two sects, despite their ominous names, have nothing to do with the legs of the otter and the distillation of wine, but (for the benefit of the reader be it said) have simply derived their names from their respective founders, Otterbein and Weinbrenner.

There was a knock at the door. "Come in!" I said, and in stepped a man of robust appearance, with a beard trimmed after that of the sainted William I. "You are the pastor?" he inquired. I answered his question in the affirmative, after which he continued, "My name is Pfalzgraf, and I should like to talk with you a while." Up to that time I had never come into immediate contact with a "Pfalzgraf." In later years, all kinds of counts and barons did me the honor of calling at my house. Recently I even had a caller who in all seriousness introduced himself as Prince Sobieski of Poland. America fairly teems with men of this type. As a rule, they are well educated; but for some reason or other they had to leave the old country, and now they roam about in this new world as men without a calling. They seem to take a special delight in

exacting tribute from the clergy. But in those former days I had not yet grown wise through experience, and, besides, in the present instance I only had to do with a man whose name was Pfalzgraf, not with one who laid claim to being of noble descent. So I straightened up and waited for Mr. Pfalzgraf to begin the conversation. He did not keep me waiting any too long, but started out at once to tell me his mission. "I have come," said he, "to effect your conversion. You are a Lutheran pastor, while I belong to the Hoffmanians. Once upon a time I also was a Lutheran, but I have since then learned that the Hoffmanians are nearer the truth in point of doctrine, and now I try to lead people into the right way."

He had thus made his intention known to me in no uncertain terms. How often I have made the observation that by conversion people do not mean turning to God, but joining some particular denomination! When they ask us to be converted, they invite us to become united with their sectarian church. As spiritual vagabonds they traverse the land, often playing great havoc in many a well established congregation. Mr. Pfalzgraf was a man of this type, and the reader may judge for himself as to whether I did the right thing by dismissing him without much ado. He looked rather dazed when I pointed in the direction of the door; but he took the hint and arose from his chair. In walking toward the place where the carpenter had left an opening, he looked at me over his right shoulder and, raising his hand for a vigorous gesture, gave vent to these words: "I see the Holy Spirit is already striving with you, but you are wilfully resisting him." After he had gone, I took up my book and looked up the "Hoffmanians." A few things about this sect may not be without interest to the reader, so I take the liberty of recording them in this connection.

In 1848 there was organized in southern Germany, under

the leadership of a candidate for the ministry named Christopher Hoffman, the so-called "Society for the Gathering of God's People in Jerusalem." It was believed that conditions in church and state were altogether corrupt and hopeless. This opinion furnished the premise for the conclusion that the only hope of the faithful lay in emigrating to the Holy Land. In 1854 the Society sent a petition, which had 439 signatures, to the German Federal Council, asking the latter to confer with the Turkish government, in behalf of the Society, for the purpose of obtaining, at a reasonable price, certain tracts of land in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The Turkish government was also to be prevailed upon to grant the Society self-government, religious freedom, and protection of life and property. The Federal Council never gave this petition any consideration. Moreover, an appeal to Jews and Christians for the necessary funds, which had been estimated at 5 million dollars, resulted in the collection of only 500 florins. The Society therefore made a provisional purchase of an estate in the neighborhood of Marbach, and on this estate the friends of Jerusalem took up their abode. From this rallying point, attempts were made to gain access to the Holy Land, and in 1872 the Society actually founded two colonies there, the one at Haifa and the other at Joppa. The whole movement, however, met with little success. Dissensions arose, and the members of the Society were scattered to the four winds. Occasionally one also finds a Hoffmanian in America.

As for the doctrinal position of this sect, it is characterized by Dr. Graul as a curious mixture of spirituality and externalism, of the New and the Old Testament, of religion and politics. We have to do here with a kind of Judaism which the Lord Himself has condemned in John 18:36 (My kingdom is not of this world), in Luke 17:20 (The kingdom of God cometh not with outward manifestations), and in John 4:23,

where He says to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father." St. Paul also raises his voice in protest against the sect here under consideration when he says (Gal. 4:26: "Jerusalem which is above is free, and is the mother of us all."

3. May the Devil Be Present Also When We Pray?

The Lutheran Church in this country may be designated as a mission church. Her pastors are, or at least should be, imbued with the missionary spirit. In the cities it is a matter of looking up our fellow Lutherans, who live in a state of dispersion among people of nearly all nationalities. They must be invited to come to the services in their mother church and to send their children to the parochial and Sunday school. This is often a very difficult task, especially where the people live at a great distance from a Lutheran church and other churches are much nearer at hand. For convenience's sake, parents often send their children to the nearest Sunday school, and in some instances they themselves attend the nearest church, contending that God's word is preached in all the churches. One must be pretty thoroughly weaned away from his mother if he feels quite as much at home with a distant relative as in the house and in the arms of his mother. This comparison I used the other day to demonstrate to a Lutheran who was sending his children to a Methodist Sunday school and who himself was attending a Methodist church, that he was in reality a very ill-bred child of his mother church. He understood the comparison, and it accomplished what much urging had failed to bring about, inasmuch as he again became a member of a Lutheran congregation. I make note of this instance here; who knows whether it may not have a good effect upon the one or the other of my readers!

But I must proceed to speak of the mission work that we

as pastors have to do when we serve a country parish. In such instances, we are often itinerant pastors, and such was also the case with me. While I could not say with that English clergyman, "The world is my parish," I was, with the exception of a pastor that belonged to the Missouri Synod, the only Lutheran pastor in three counties. I soon learned how to handle horses, although it took me some time before I knew how to tie a horse so well that it could not become untied. But at last this difficulty was also mastered. In fact, I was able to tie a horse just as fast, if not faster, than the man who had taught me the trick. Here also the saying proved true, "Practice makes perfect." As a well taught coachman, I drove about in the country. Soon I knew every Lutheran within a wide territory. With the Lord's help, I succeeded in gathering and organizing several Lutheran congregations. In addition to my main charge, I had thus secured three affiliated congregations, and a fourth one was soon to be added.

The day for effecting its organization had been determined. It was to be the second day of Pentecost. When I entered the place where we were conducting our services for the time being, I noticed to my great joy that a great many men were among the attendants. All kinds of people were present at the founding of the Church at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, etc., as we read in Acts 2. In my case, nearly all parts of Germany were represented: there were Mecklenburgians and Pomeranians, Westphalians and Hanoveranians, Suabians and Hessians; also several Saxonians and a German speaking Dane were in attendance; even an African had appeared on the scene, although he was not a son of Ham, but a plain German, who with his family had come from Capetown in Africa to settle within the boundaries of my mission parish here in America.

The first thing decided was the name of the new congre-

gation. It was called Salem Lutheran Church, to indicate that peace was to dwell within its walls. The other paragraphs of the Constitution were then also discussed, after which this document was signed by all the men present, with the exception of one, who had all the time listened very attentively, but taken no part in the discussion. "Well," said I, turning to him, "do you not also want to sign the Constitution?" "No," he replied curtly and decidedly. "Do you belong to the Lutheran church?" I asked. He again answered with a very decided "no." I: "To what church do you belong?" He: "I am a Christian." I: "All of us are, but under existing conditions one must belong to some special Denomination." He: "Well, for that matter, I am a member of the 'Evangelical Association.'" I: "So you are a Methodist?" He: "No, I am a Baptist." I: "Well and good, were you formerly a Lutheran?" He: "I was." I: "What made you desert the Lutheran church?" He: "That I will tell you: in the Lutheran church one is not allowed to pray." I: "How can such a thing be said? I am a Lutheran pastor, but the idea that prayer is not permitted in the Lutheran church is new to me." He: "Yes, the ministers dare pray, but not the members of the congregation." I: "But does not the pastor, whenever he is about to offer prayer, say to the congregation, 'Let us pray?' What the pastor utters in audible words, the congregation is to join in silently, and if you have not done this, it is your own fault." "Oh," said he, "that is not what I mean. A brother once knelt down in the center aisle and prayed aloud for the pastor and the congregation. For this he was reprimanded, and he was told not to do it a second time." I: "It is indeed not customary in our church for men and women to pray aloud during a public service. The Lord Himself advises us to offer prayers of this kind in private. If the officers of the church objected to the prayer which that man offered in opposition to what is cus-

tomary in our public services, their objection was quite in order. Besides, there is great danger connected with the public offering of extemporaneous prayer. The devil often has a hand in prayers thus offered. He influences people in such a way that while they pray in public they do not think at all of Him to whom they are speaking, but are rather taken up with themselves, delighting in their own eloquence and taking pride in being able to pray more unctuously than others. Thus prayer loses its true objective and becomes a means of nourishing one's false pride." He (rising to his feet): "So you believe that the devil may also be present when we pray?" I: "Under certain conditions, yes; and when prayers of the Methodist type are offered, he certainly is dangerously near." He: "Shame on you!" With a fearful bang he closed the door and vanished out of sight.

As for the newly organized congregation, it did honor to its name by ever being peaceable. It could be said of its members that they were all of one heart and of one soul.

4. Contradictions in the Bible.

In all the world, there isn't another book that has to suffer as many vicious attacks as the Bible. When anyone assumes to criticise a book, we take it for granted that he has at least read it; but there are any number of people who pose as critics of the Bible without having so much as read the sacred volume. In fact, the most vaunted Bible critics are those who have not even given the Scriptures a superficial survey, not to speak of their having familiarized themselves with the contents of the book.

One day I was riding on a steamer. There was a goodly number of passengers, and for a few days at least they frequently came in contact with one another. One formed many new acquaintances. All kinds of nationalities were represented,

and all types of religious views as well, a fact which intensified my interest in the company I was more or less compelled to move in for the time being. We were a promiscuous crowd of orthodox Christians and free-thinkers, of pietists and indifferentists. Although it is not my way to assume the typically clerical air, I also avoid going to the opposite extreme, and am even pleased when anyone approaches me, saying, "I suppose you are a clergyman?" I have known pastors who studiously avoided everything in their dress and bearing that tended to make them known as members of the clerical profession, and I have also been in contact with pastors who studiously did everything to make themselves appear as gentlemen of the cloth. As I view the matter, one should avoid either of these two extremes, and simply conduct himself as a Christian both in his speech and in his general bearing.

Accordingly, I did not put myself out to be recognized as a pastor, but it soon became known among the passengers that there was a pastor on board the ship. It was distinctly noticeable that my fellow travelers changed their attitude toward me: some grew more friendly and amiable, while others, whose number was decidedly the smaller, ceased to pay me any attention, showing that for them I simply did not exist. But when it happened that we were all together in the same room, and on account of the inclemency of the weather this was not an infrequent occurrence, one could hear all kinds of insinuating remarks about hypocrites and men of the cloth. Although my name was never so much as mentioned, such remarks were all intended for my ears.

One evening a gentleman by the name of Deubel raised his voice to such a pitch that he could be plainly heard above the din of voices that filled the room, and said: "In this advanced day and age, no sensible man still believes in the Bible;" after which he took a glass of rum and poured it down

his throat, looking as if he were very much pleased with his own eloquence. If I had yielded to my first impulse, I would have ventured the retort, "Your great namesake (Deubel bears a similarity to Teufel, the devil), though a relentless enemy of the Bible, evidently believes in it." But the thought vanished from my mind as quickly as it had flashed across its horizon. In the face of such attacks, I had often observed silence, but this time I could not persuade myself that silence was golden, especially not since a number of the passengers looked at me in such a way as if they expected me to say something. So I said in tones quite as voluminous as those of the gentleman who had just spoken: "Do you believe me to be a sensible man?" The din of voices suddenly was hushed, and silence reigned. The person addressed could not evade my question under the circumstances, so he made the somewhat reluctant admission, "I have no special reason to doubt your being a sensible person." "Very well, I believe in the Bible," I made bold to remark, "and I say this to show you that your point was not well taken. You exaggerate matters, to say the least." Mr. Deubel, however, did not seem to be embarrassed; he replied, "I simply can not comprehend how it is possible for anyone still to believe in the Bible, since it is full of contradictions from the beginning to the end."

The battle was on. I demanded, "It will be for you to point out to us a few of these contradictions." "Most willingly," he replied, in a triumphant tone of voice. "You see, it is said in the Bible that Cain went into another country, and there took unto himself a wife; in another passage the Bible states that Adam and Eve had but two sons, Cain and Abel; whence, then, did Cain get his wife? Here we evidently have a contradiction." Everybody now sat up and took notice, even the card players in the remote corner of the room ceased their playing for a moment and listened to what was coming. I

must confess that I was a little astonished to hear again this oft repeated and as oft refuted objection. But I proceeded to reply to it just the same. Said I, "My dear sir, have you ever read the Bible?" "No," he replied with a derisive smile, "not beyond the extent to which I was compelled to study it at the time of my confirmation." I then went on to say, "I might call your attention to the fact that it is unworthy of a man who claims to be educated to pass judgment on a matter of which he has no first-hand knowledge. However, if you had read with care only the first few chapters of the Bible you would have noticed that Adam and Eve are said to have had many sons and daughters; for thus it is written in Genesis 5:4. Cain and Abel are specially mentioned in connection with the fratricide which the one committed and the other suffered; but the Scriptures also state plainly that in addition to these two Adam and Eve had many other children, daughters as well as sons." "I do not believe," Mr. Deubel interrupted me, "that this is contained in my Bible." "Furthermore," I proceeded to say, "according to the will and counsel of God, the whole human race was to be descended from a single pair; the law which prohibits marriages between near relatives was not given until much later, so that there was nothing to hinder Cain from marrying his sister. Nor is it said that Cain went into another country and there took unto himself a wife. The Biblical records simply state that Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod (which means exile) on the east of Eden, and that Cain knew his wife. Thus by inference we learn from the Bible that Cain took his wife with him into that other country when he left the land where his parents lived. For a sensible man," I said, "there is no contradiction in this whole story."

An elderly gentleman approached me at this juncture, gave me his hand and said, "I thank you for your interpreta-

tion. This story has also worried me; but I see now that it really contains no contradiction." Mr. Deubel was asked to mention some other contradictions, but he knew only of this one, and a sense of shame prompted him to withdraw from our company. The laughter of those present was the well deserved punishment of this braggard.

Thus it goes. The people who rail against the word of God often have not so much as given it a superficial survey, but simply speak from what they have incidentally heard others relate, and if one enters into a conversation with them, one usually finds out that they know little or nothing about the Bible. I have written this incident to encourage the readers to show their colors. A brave confession of faith tends to strengthen one in his religious convictions, others are won over to the side of truth, and the infidel critics find out that we are not afraid to face them. The confession of faith that is made by a loyal member of the congregation often is much more effective than the testimony of the pastor. "Whosoever confesseth Me before men," says our Lord and Master, "him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven."

5. At the World's Fair.

It was in the year of 1893. Chicago had opened the gates to the World's Fair. From all directions people came to see the wonders of the White City. In those days a dear brother in the ministry called at my house and said, "Tomorrow I am going to start for Chicago; will you go with me?" My willingness must have been written in my face. I looked at my wife, and she nodded her consent. By way of reward, I promised to look at everything very closely and give her a full report upon my return. But she made her consent dependent upon one condition: I was to buy myself a new pair of boots, since my old ones looked too badly worn. Her intentions were

praiseworthy; she wanted me to look neat. So I met her condition and the next morning joined my friend on a trip to the World's Fair. We arrived in Chicago all safe and sound. A good friend of ours received us into his hospitable home, and after a night of precious rest we were prepared to view all the glories, or rather to endure all the hardships, that were in store for us. The task was not altogether easy for anyone who did not happen to be wearing a new pair of boots, but for me the wanderings of the first day meant positive torture. I therefore felt a deep longing to indulge in periods of rest, but as often as I expressed this longing I was told, "We must not lose any time if we want to see everything." Of course, I wanted to see everything, so I held out bravely.

But I was more than glad when the day was over and we had returned to our lodging place. My feet were indeed so sore that I could hardly stand on them. I must have looked as if I had lost my last friend; for a minister's wife, who together with her husband was stopping at the same hotel, took pity on me and sympathetically inquired as to what might be the cause of my looking so woe-begone. I told her about my new boots and the effect they were having on my feet. Strange to say, she had a similar tale of woe to relate. Just as my wife had prevailed upon me to buy a new pair of boots, so her husband had persuaded her to purchase a new pair of shoes. So we both experienced the truth of the saying, "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." The two sufferers could comfort each other with expressions of sincere sympathy. "But what of tomorrow?" I asked. With a smile of triumph she displayed a pair of felt shoes which she was going to wear the next day, and the very thought of it gladdened her heart in advance. She came within an ace of persuading me to follow her example.

The next morning she started out on soft soles. With an air of triumph I saw her promenading on the Midway Plaisance. I had again put on my boots, and this proved to be a wise thing, for it began to rain early in the forenoon, and the rain did not abate all day. What effect the wet paths had upon the felt shoes the reader may imagine. To the pastor's dear wife I herewith send cordial greetings. She will not be angry with me, I hope, for having related our mutual distress and given it such wide publicity.

I have dwelt on the story of my new boots to such an extent for a special reason. They were the cause of another meeting at the World's Fair. Since I was not able to use my feet very much the second day, I spent quite a little of my time at the art gallery and utilized the precious hours by studying the fine paintings, especially those of German artists. Not far from Lenbach's picture of Bismarck, my attention was especially attracted by a painting which was catalogued, "The Pursuit of Happiness." The picture represented a rider who, mounted on a fiery steed, pursues an airy form that moves through space ahead of him, and is meant to represent happiness or what we are wont to call fortune. His whole mien shows his eagerness to lay hold on the vaporous form; he does not see that by the way a beggar opens his hand to receive an alms; nor does he take notice of a little child that is being trodden under foot by his galloping horse; right ahead of him a deep abyss is yawning, but this also he does not perceive, his eyes are exclusively focussed upon the airy form ahead of him.

I had been sitting before this picture a long while and also heard various remarks about it from people who passed by, when an elderly man sat down beside me, likewise looking at the picture very intently. Suddenly turning toward me, he remarked, "How few of the people passing here will under-

stand what this picture really is meant to represent!" I replied, "At all events it is something very serious that the artist here brings to our view." "Yes," said he, "good fortune may well be represented as a phantom. People pursue such misty forms, the one regarding this and the other that as good fortune or happiness.—What is good fortune?" he continued after a pause. "this is a question to which one may well seek an answer." He gave me an inquiring look and asked, "How would you answer this question?" I replied somewhat evasively, "I consider that person happy who is contented with his lot, and who uses his best endeavors to fill the place to which God has assigned him." "I would go a step farther," he remarked, "I would say that he-is happy who has peace. Do you understand?" I understood him, but I was anxious to have him say more, so I replied, "You believe a person to be happy if peace has a dwelling place in his house, that peace which results from a family life permeated by the spirit of true love?" "No," was his reply, "What I mean is the peace of the heart. I do not know your attitude toward the matter; but you have heard, have you not, of One who came into the world to bring us peace?" I nodded, and he went on to say, "It is He who has given me peace of heart. Since I have learned to believe in Christ as my Savior and through Him have come to the certainty of being a child of God, I have what I should call real happiness, not a mere phantom, such as we behold in this picture, but an actual possession. Hence my way does not lead into an abyss, but upward to the heavenly home." While he said this, his eyes fairly shone, and involuntarily I thought of the words of Holy Writ, "We can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard." "Spontaneously I extended my hand to him and said, "My friend, I also believe in Him who wrought peace through the shedding of His blood, and I likewise regard this as the

highest good, to have the assurance by faith in Jesus that one is a child of God and that eternal life is his in the blessed world beyond." In the midst of the surging multitudes, two had found each other who were at one in the confession, Christ is our peace! With a warm handshake we parted from each other.

While in Chicago attending the World's Fair, I saw many beautiful things, but the brief hour which I spent with that mature Christian in conversation on the deeper things of life has to this day remained one of my most cherished memories. At first I had been really ill-tempered on account of my uncomfortable foot-wear; but later I had to admit that it was after all a decided advantage for me, because otherwise I would not have had that precious experience in the art gallery. It served to give me the assurance that the Lord everywhere has those who confess Him, and I believe that their number is greater than one might suppose, judging from outward appearances. But if there is anyone among my readers who has his doubts as to what constitutes true happiness, I would say to him in closing:

True happiness is his alone
Who Jesus and His peace doth own.

6. Visiting a Bachelor.

Within the limits of my parish lived a man of about fifty years, who was not a regular member of my congregation, but who occasionally attended the services in my church. As yet, I had not been in a position to talk to him personally. Some way, he seemed to evade such opportunities as might have led to an extended conversation with others. I made inquiries about him, but was unable to gain much information by this method. He was known as a bachelor, and people said that he would not allow anyone to enter his house. An

attempt in that direction had always been thwarted by the large Newfoundland dog that the bachelor owned. The people inferred that he must have money, since he did not apply himself to any kind of regular work.

I made up my mind that I would visit this man, even the large Newfoundland dog was not going to keep me back. So one day I carefully wrapped something up in a piece of paper, stuck it into my coat pocket and started out to call at the bachelor's house. I was determined to effect an entrance. A little curiosity may have helped to strengthen me in this determination, but in the main my purpose was to make him emerge from his lonely life and persuade him to become a regular church attendant. Since he had come to my church several times, I felt as if I had a certain right to break in upon his privacy.

After a brisk walk of several miles, I had reached my destination. The bachelor's house stood somewhat isolated. In approaching it, one had to pass through a flower garden, which presented a very neat appearance. The flower beds to the right and to the left of the walk were kept free from noxious weeds and all the walks were strewn with clean gravel. "A person who loves flowers has a good heart," my grandmother used to say, and I believe that this saying contains a grain of truth. When one enters a house where flowers are kept and nursed, even though they be only a few geraniums or primulas, one may take it for granted that at least one of the inmates of that house "has a good heart." So I gained sufficient courage to pass through the gate that led into the flower garden in front of the house.

In closing the gate, I made just enough noise to arouse the dog. He came out of his kennel and sprang directly in front of me, thus blocking my way. I reached into my pocket and drew forth that paper, into which I had wrapped a tempt-

ing bone. Unfolding the paper, taking out the bone and throwing it before the dog was the work of a second. But in thinking that the dog would eagerly grab for the bone and disappear with it, I had reckoned without the host. The dog looked at the bone with contempt and did not so much as smell of it. He even withdrew his eyes from the bone and turned them on me. At the same time he growled most significantly. Deeming discretion the better part of valor, I did not advance another step. What was I to do? I talked to the dog in the most friendly terms, fairly begging him to get out of the way. I even put forth my hand to stroke his mane a little. But another growl on his part convinced me that he would not be bribed. I felt that he would have no hesitation in attacking me if I so much as stirred from the spot. In my predicament I anxiously waited for a voice to call back the dog, but for some time it seemed as though I was to wait in vain. However, when the dog renewed his growl with such intensity as to show that he meant to control the situation and not permit me to pass, even advancing a step and giving me to understand that I was to leave the premises, the curtain was pushed back and a face appeared at the window. A moment later the door was opened, and out stepped the owner both of the house and the dog. For a brief moment he seemed to feast his eyes on the sight that he beheld, but then he called the dog. "Phylax," said he, "and the dog promptly turned aside. When the watchful canine saw his master shake hands with me, he even wagged his tail very courteously, as if to say, "Excuse me, I didn't know you were my master's friend."

"Mr. A," said I, "it has been my intention for some time to pay you a visit, but not until today has the good will been followed by the deed." "Haven't you heard," he asked, "that nobody enters my house?" and his demeanor was such that

I could not tell how to interpret his question. However, I replied, "People have indeed said as much, but I believed none the less that you would permit me to enter your home, or I shouldn't have come at all." "May I ask what has brought you here?" he demanded. In reply, I might have taken the bull by the horns, figuratively speaking. I might have said to him, "It is my business to look up people who have no church connections. I want to invite you to attend our services regularly and to become a member of our congregation." I might have said, "If all people acted as you do, how could we ministers reach them with our message?" Yes, I might have said all this and a lot more. Instead of that, however, I simply remarked, "You are a lonesome man, and I thought it might cheer you up a little if some one visited you and thus took pity on you in your loneliness." The word pity did not seem to please him. "Pity?" said he, "how so?" I: "God did not intend that man should live alone, but in company with others. He said, 'It is not good that a man should be alone.'"

Here he interrupted me, and in a timid tone of voice inquired, "You surely do not want to find a wife for me?" I assured him that this idea had not even occurred to me in my remotest dreams, that I merely had intended to call his attention to the fact that if God Himself did not consider it good for a man to be alone it surely must be true. "Being alone has its great advantages," he interposed. I agreed to this. We, the readers and I, know that we occasionally long for times of solitude and privacy; we know that such seasons for being alone are necessary, but only in order that we may then be so much better able to live and act in the company of our fellow men. I gave vent to all these thoughts and then added, "But always to be alone, is neither good nor advisable, so I have come to interrupt your solitude. For the time being,

this is the only object of my visit." "So you have other intentions besides the one you have mentioned?" he asked. "Such is indeed the case," I frankly admitted, "but you need not be alarmed, I can assure you that I have no intentions of an evil nature; least of all do I intend to procure a wife for you."

We were still standing on the same spot in front of the house, and I had my doubts as to whether he would ultimately invite me to cross the threshold of his door. The situation was relieved by a few heavy rain drops that fell from the clouded sky, indicating that more drops were soon to follow. I should not have been surprised if he had said, "Excuse me, it is starting to rain, and I don't care to get wet." However, this is not what he did say. After pausing a while, he remarked, "I suppose now I shall have to let you in." I observed, "You do not have to let me in; if my company is not agreeable to you, I shall return home, as I do not care to discommodate you." "No," said he very decidedly, "I beg you to enter." So I entered his den. He opened a door to the right and led me into the room. Having offered me a chair, he said, "You will excuse me for a few moments," and forthwith disappeared. The readers will find it quite natural that I now began to look around a little. I have seen many a bachelor's den, I have lived in one myself and must admit that in practically all of them one missed the touch of the woman's hand, which brings order out of chaos and beauty out of ugliness. I even know of a jovial bachelor above whose writing desk one read the inscription, "What is home without a wife?" Right below, the answer was written with a lead pencil, "It is the seat of misery." And this applies to nearly all bachelors' houses. But in the present instance no signs of misery were noticeable. Here everything was different: white curtains, a clean table cloth, dustless floors, an air of neatness

about the whole house. It really is a source of satisfaction for me to be able to tell my lady readers that there are also men who can keep things looking neat and tidy. In addition to a sofa, a table and a number of chairs, the room also contained a case of books. I hardly think that I transgressed the laws of propriety by examining some of the literary treasures; I should have done the same thing if the master of the house had been present. "By what a man reads, we can tell what kind of a character he has." A man's reading shows his breeding. It was so in the present instance. Among this man's books I found Redenbacher's History of the World, Grube's Geographical Sketches, several novels of Dahn and Freitag and, as I was especially glad to observe, a Bible, one of the kind that betrays diligent use. In not a few homes one may find a large illustrated Bible ornamenting the parlor table. I must say that this is not altogether distasteful to me. I regard it as a sign that the people still have a few dollars left for a Bible, and that they are at least not ashamed of their religion. However, such large Bibles are very seldom used. With their heavy gilded covers they seem to say, "Touch me not!" Hence, my advice to people has been, "Buy yourselves a small Bible, and then make diligent use of it." To own a Bible, is good; to use it, is better; to find in it the bread of life, is the main thing.—Here, then, I found a Bible that showed wear and therefore must have been frequently used.

The master of the house soon joined me, having put on a black coat and a clean white collar in honor of his guest. He handed me a cigar and also lit one for himself. Then he sat down opposite me and was ready to hear what I might have to say. For a moment I was a little embarrassed. Of course, I knew just what I wanted, but it seemed a little hard to get a conversation started. However, since my host did

not break the silence, I opened our interview by saying, "I have just been looking at your library and am glad to see a Bible among your books." "Yes," he replied, "it is the gift I received from my mother at the time of my confirmation. This Bible has been my steady companion through all these years, and I have used it, too; but I do not believe everything that is contained in the Scriptures. I might as well tell you that to begin with, so that you may know my attitude of mind toward the Bible." He gave me a searching look, as if to see what kind of an effect his words had produced. I replied very calmly, "You do not believe everything that the Bible contains, from which I infer it contains some things which you do believe. Which are some of the things that you do not find credible?" "The fish story of Jonah and the donkey story of Bileam," he replied without hesitation. His reply did not surprise me in the least. This man has many colleagues; just these and a few other stories are a real crux to many, even to the pious. I asked him, "Why do you not believe these stories?" "Because they simply can not be true," was his contention. I: "Do you believe that God created the world?" He: "Yes, that I believe; one who says that the world came of itself is a fool." I: "Now, should He who created the world not be able to provide a place of shelter for a short time in the body of a large fish? Should His power be limited to such an extent? With a miracle of His omnipotence we also have to deal in the case of Bileam. If we take seriously our confession of faith, 'I believe in the Almighty,' it should not be hard for us also to believe these stories."

"But these stories seem so incredible," he observed. "And yet," I replied, "they are intended to teach us vital truths, or they would not be recorded in the Bible. However, our salvation depends neither upon Jonah's fish nor upon Bileam's

donkey. The chief thing is to believe that Jesus died for us, that He bore our guilt, that through Him we have forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. Do you believe this?" He (very decidedly): "Yes, this I believe; what should become of us if we didn't have a Savior?" I: "Then I am surprised that you do not attend church better." He: "You know, going to church does not save anyone. I: "That I know indeed, but I also know that one who does not go to church despises the word of God." He: "With me it is not a matter of despising God's word; the hitch is elsewhere." I: "What hitch?" He: "I'll tell you. Sometimes I feel like objecting to what the pastor says in his sermons, for I do not always agree with him, but one is not permitted to offer any objections, the pastor is undisputed master of the situation, and this is what has often aggravated me. Now you know the reason." He had worked himself into a state of great excitement, and I could hardly suppress a smile. People have all kinds of reasons for staying away from the house of God, but this one was altogether new to me. I tried to make it plain to him that it is not the pastor, but the Lord Jesus, whose word must be taken as authoritative, and that to every sermon the Master's words apply, "He that heareth you heareth Me." "However," said I, "if anything does not please you, just come to me after the service, and we'll discuss the point of difference; perhaps we can come to an agreement." He asked, "Do you mean to say that you will allow me to express my opinion on what you say in your sermonic discourses?" He said this in such a tone of voice as if he had not always found favor with pastors when he ventured to tell them his opinion. This, at least, was my impression. But I answered him, saying, "Surely, I will allow you this. We Lutheran pastors want people in our churches who listen attentively and afterwards ponder the things they have heard, thus resembling the Chris-

tians at Berea, of whom it is said that they received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether the things Paul told them were in agreement with the sacred writings."

"If I may express my opinion, I shall attend your church," my host now stated with emphasis. More and more I noticed that it was his hobby to express his opinion, so I said in a vein of humor, "You may express your opinion as often as you like, only you must not take it as a foregone conclusion that your opinion is always correct; in every instance the Holy Scriptures must be the criterion; do you agree to that?" "Selfevidently," he replied, "I recognize the authority of the Scriptures."

Well, this man not only became a regular attendant, but also proved to be my sincere friend. Henceforth we often met in church and elsewhere. Many a time I heard his opinion, but he was never unwilling to be corrected if he happened to be in the wrong, and he always submitted to the decision of the Scriptures. Withal, he continued to lead the single life. When I occasionally advised him to find a suitable life companion, and supported my advice by citing the words of the Lord, "It is not good that a man should be alone," he invariably supported his own preference for the single life by quoting the opinion of St. Paul, according to which he that marries does well, but he that remains single does better. And to this opinion he ever held fast.

7. His Epitaph.

On my way from a mission festival, I was seated in a railroad car, holding in my hand an old copy of the "Christoterpe" which contained a beautiful poem by Rudolf Koegel entitled, "A Home for the Homeless." I had turned to this lovely poem, and was about to begin reading it, when my

attention was attracted to a man who took a seat right opposite me, which I had turned back in order to have a little more room. He must have been pretty well along in years, since his long, wavy beard, which hung down upon his breast, was quite gray. Through his goldrimmed spectacles looked two blue, melancholy eyes. He drew some stationery out of his traveling bag and started to write. But I noticed that after he had written a few lines he revised them very thoroughly, striking out certain words and inserting others. I became interested in this man, hardly knowing why, and must have watched him rather intently, since he began to show signs of uneasiness.

Suddenly he raised his head and asked me in German, "Why do you look at me so steadily?" Quite in accordance with the truth, I replied, "For some reason or other, you interest me." Rather good-naturedly he asked, "How can an old man like me still arouse anyone's interest?" "I suppose," said I, "that you are writing on a weighty subject, since you seem to be thinking so intensively and making so many revisions." "You have observed well," he remarked, "and even at the risk of your laughing at me I am going to tell you what is occupying my thoughts. The fact of the matter is, I have been writing my own epitaph." My curiosity now gave way to a feeling of surprise, and I asked him, "Is your mind occupied with thoughts of death?" "When a man has reached my age, death may come at any time," he replied, "and I want to know what inscription my tombstone is to bear." This intensified my interest in the man still more, and with less modesty than inquisitiveness I asked, "Have you finished writing your epitaph?" "Yes," he replied, and willingly read to me the following product of his pen:

In God this aged man doth safely rest,
Since all his life he ne'er God's law transgressed.

Take heed, O reader, soon will dawn the day
When surely thou wilt also pass away.

"Ah," I exclaimed, "you even write poetry?" "Yes," he replied with a strange smile, "there are so many nonsensical verses inscribed upon tombstones, and I wanted an inscription on mine that would be worth reading. Moreover, I am of the opinion that such an inscription should always give rise to serious reflection on the part of those who may chance to read it. But tell me, what do you think of my epitaph?" While I must confess that it did not appeal to me either in form or content, I did not want to offend him by any blunt expression of my opinion. So I made a sort of provisional reply by saying, "You are right, many senseless inscriptions are to be seen on the tombstones in our cemeteries. To say the least, they lack the genuine Christian sentiment. In their whole appearance, our places of burial do not impress one as being Christian cemeteries. Our monuments consist of large stone blocks, broken pillars, shattered trees and smoldering torches; but the emblem that so eloquently testifies of our Christian hope and victory is seldom in evidence." He did not seem to understand me very well; for he asked, "Just what do you mean by this?" I replied, "I mean to say that when we visit a cemetery of the heathen in Bombay or in Alexandria, it does not impress us as being so very much different from our own. What we miss in many of our American cemeteries is the *cross*." "So you also believe in the Christian religion?" he said in a cordial tone of voice, "I am glad of that." After I had disclosed to him the fact that I was a Lutheran minister, he extended his hand to me and said, "Then you are indeed competent to pass an opinion on my epitaph; tell me, please, what you think of it."

I now told him frankly that according to my opinion it contained a statement that was quite at variance with the

truth, because he was indeed very much in error if he cherished the opinion that he had never transgressed the law of God. He wanted to justify himself by saying that he had never done his fellow men any harm or injury, that he had seldom missed the divine services on a Sunday, and that even in his epitaph he had taken occasion to confess his faith, inasmuch as it was to read, "In *God* this aged man doth safely rest." I now tried to make it clear to him that if he were to examine his life carefully, he would be brought to the knowledge of having done wrong in various ways; I reminded him of the Scriptural saying, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one"; I pointed to the apostle Paul, who had no hesitation in pronouncing himself chief among sinners, and I added, "You must change your epitaph if it is to be true and correct." I even went so far as to suggest that he adopt the following altered form:

In God this aged man doth safely rest,
Although in life he oft God's law transgressed;
For he partook of God's forgiving grace,
And Christ for him in heaven gained a place.

He asked me to give him these lines in writing. Unfortunately, the time had come for him to leave the train. In shaking hands with me, he said, "I do not quite like the admission, 'he *oft* God's laws transgressed,' but I shall consider the changes that you have suggested." Whether he actually changed his epitaph in accordance with my suggestions, I am unable to say; I did not even find out the man's name and place of residence; but for some time my thoughts reverted to him and his epitaph. I came to the conclusion that the best inscription for a tombstone is a Bible verse that expresses the deceased person's faith and is at the same time an admonition for those who visit or pass by his grave. Thus the sainted Jasper v. Oertzen, who for many years was

superintendent of city missions in Hamburg, gave specific instructions to erect upon his grave a cross which should, in addition to his name, bear the words of Holy Writ, "This man was also with that Jesus of Nazareth." The well known preacher and author Max Frommel selected for his epitaph the words, "He went on his way rejoicing." Another Christian author, Otto Funke, was of the opinion that John 3:16 would be the proper inscription for his tombstone.—Then, too, we should make our influence felt in favor of using the cross as an emblem for decorating the graves of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. It should be true also of us:

Upon our graves we like to plant the cross
In token that we've gained despite our loss.

In the Kurmark there is a cemetery in which every grave is decorated with a cross of whitethorn. The arms of the various crosses touch each other and are so intertwined as to symbolize the thought that the whole sleeping congregation, rich and poor, young and old, is still united under the sign of the cross. A more fitting arrangement for a cemetery can hardly be imagined. We may not be able to use the same beautiful symbolism in our American cemeteries, but let us at least decorate the graves of our departed with that sign in which we conquer, the sign of the cross.—

At the close of my conversation with the man who was writing his own epitaph, I was still holding in my hand the book that contained the beautiful poem by Rudolf Koegel, "A Home for the Homeless." Its last stanza harmonized so well with my thoughts that I shall cite it in concluding the present narrative.

We are people washed ashore
By time's onrushing river,

Yet hopeful of celestial lore
Through Christ, the royal Giver.
The cross of Golgatha lends cheer
'Mid trials and extortion;
Our Father's house is ever near,
And heaven is our portion.

IV. All Kinds of Christians

1. The Doctor.

AT a Christening party, where an ample dinner was given in honor of the occasion, someone made the discovery that exactly thirteen persons had taken their respective places at the table. Among the invited guests there was one who had declared that he considered himself a Christian, but that he did not think it necessary to go to church; enlightened people, he contended, do not need religious instruction every Sunday, but can well get along without it. This very person was the one who discovered that the dinner party consisted of just thirteen, and who tried his best so to intimidate the guests that one or the other might get up and leave the company, thus reducing the number of those present at the dinner to twelve.

“A man who boasts of his enlightenment and education should not be disquieted by the number thirteen,” I made bold to remark. To this the gentleman in question replied, “That 13 is an unlucky number, is seen in the case of Jesus and His disciples; not until Judas had left the company, did the others grow quiet and was their excitement dissipated.” “Nonsense!” said one of the women among the guests, “in our midst there is no Judas; I propose that we begin to eat.” The hostess beckoned to me, and I, knowing what she meant, said grace; but when I looked up, that brave gentleman had disappeared. The man who occupied the chair next to mine said what I was on the point of saying myself: “When the heart loses faith, it becomes filled with superstition.”—The vacant chair was occupied by another person, so that there were again 13 of us,

and we all ate with a splendid appetite. I might add that of these 13 persons not one has died up to the present time, although that particular gentleman had made himself an oracle and predicted that one of us would die within a year.

What had occurred at this Christening party furnished me the occasion for preaching a sermon on the subject of superstition, which is still such a potent factor in the lives of uncounted millions. During that sermon I dwelt on such forms of superstition as the stopping of blood and the curing of bodily ills by such means as sorcerers are wont to employ. I tried to make it plain to my people that they as Christians must not indulge in these things, since they belong to the realm of sins against the second commandment, which forbids our using the name of God in vain.

The next day I was on my way to visit a sick person in the congregation, when one of my parishioners chanced to fall in with me and walked by my side. "I was just going to call at your house," he said, "you railed at me yesterday in your sermon, and I wanted to take you to task for it." I told him that I was not aware of having said anything that might justify him in bringing such a charge against me. Did you not say", he asked, "that those who stop the flow of blood, cure people of fever and free them from other bodily ills by reciting Bible verses or using the name of God are transgressors of the second commandment?" I replied, "Yes; are you, then, one of the people who make a practice of these things?" He: "To be sure, I do these things, and I am glad that my grandmother taught me them. I have helped many a one whom the doctors could not give any relief, and do you mean to say that in so doing I committed sin? Let me tell you, pastor, if that is what you call sorcery then you commit sorcery every Sunday in the pulpit." I: "What do you mean? I fail

to understand you." He: "Well, I pray and pronounce the three highest names, and you do the same thing." I: "What do you pray when you undertake to help people?" He: "I have different prayers for different kinds of sickness.—"When you want to stop the flow of blood, what do you pray then?"—"I really ought not to tell this to any person of the male persuasion; but you are the pastor, so I suppose it will do no harm to tell you." He now recited a verse. "And this verse," said I, "you *must* pray."—"Yes, and I must also pronounce the three highest names, or no cure will be effected. The healing must be done in the name of God."

I now explained to him the fact that the sinfulness of the whole procedure consisted in using the name of God as it should not be used, according to His own command, and that his verses and prayers were in reality not prayers, but the means of committing sorcery, a practice clearly at variance with the word of God. In a sense, he was thus trying to compel God to relieve people from their sufferings, while these might be necessary to strengthen them in their spiritual warfare.

"Oh," said he sarcastically, "then I suppose we should let people suffer, even when we are able to help them? How do you harmonize that with Christian love? Verily, you are a fine specimen of a pastor." "It can not be the will of God to help by these means," I replied, "otherwise He would not have forbidden the use of His name for such purposes." "But I know of cases," said he almost in defiance, "where my means proved effective." "Then the cure was not brought about in the name of God," I persisted. "I have been attending your church with pleasure," he now replied, "but if you take me for a godless man, that ends my church attendance."

He was now ready to leave me. I told him not to quit the church. He might think that he was doing the right thing,

but he was nevertheless in the wrong. It was for him to accept instruction from me, his pastor. "You are but a young man," he replied, "and want to tell me what I should do? No, in this particular I am better informed than you. I know what is right and what is wrong. The dear Lord has thus far attended my efforts with His blessing, and He will do so also in the future, even without your consent."

"So you are determined not to attend church anymore?" I asked. "O yes," said he, "I shall attend church, but I am through with you. I shall now go to Pastor M.'s church. He is a very learned and pious man. His opinion of these things seems to differ from yours. When he speaks to me, he is always very friendly and calls me 'Herr Doktor.'" He went. Later I met him at different times but I did not succeed in making him see the error of his way.

But the word of God shall firm remain: they who do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, and they who suffer themselves to be treated by the sorcerer are in the bonds of superstition, despite their vaunted Christianity.

2. Mr. Lebemann.

One day I received the information that Mr. Lebemann was very ill. I am always thankful when cases of sickness in the congregation are reported to me. This does not always happen. Many a time people are well again before I find out that they were sick. The strange thing about it is that the sick person acts very much surprised to think that the pastor does not know all about his sickness and doesn't so much as pay him a single visit. He or she so longed to see the pastor and to receive spiritual consolation, but he failed to appear, as if it were not his duty to visit the sick.

Now, all the members of the congregation should know that the pastor is not omniscient, and when they want him

to pay them a visit, for instance, in a case of sickness, they should notify him. If they fail to do this, they must not blame the pastor for failing to visit them. In the present instance I had been notified, though indirectly, and so I started out immediately to see the man who had been reported to me as being very ill.

Mrs. Lebemann received me very pleasantly and went into the sickroom to announce my visit. She kept me waiting quite a while, came out of the bedroom and seemed to look for something, finally carried some object into the bedroom under her apron and then bade me enter. At the very moment when I entered the room where the sick man lay, he closed the Bible.

The whole affair looked rather suspicious. After a few words of greeting, I asked the patient, "You have been reading?" "Yes," said he, putting on the face of a typical Pharisee, "it is my only occupation now to comfort myself with God's word." "What have you been reading?" I inquired. He hesitated a little and then said, "I have been reading in the Old Testament." "What in the Old Testament?" I unmercifully demanded. Another pause, then the answer, "I read a chapter every day, sometimes more." "What chapter have you read today?" I persisted in quizzing him. Something like perspiration appeared on his brow, and some of the readers may think that I didn't do right in thus fairly subjecting him to an examination. But I did it because I was convinced that his wife had hunted the Bible for him after my arrival at the house, and that he was simply trying to perpetrate an act of pious fraud by making me believe that the Bible was his daily companion.

My last question was not to his taste either, but he finally answered, "I do not remember; my memory is fast failing me. I think, however, that it was the sixteenth chapter." This time

he had really told the truth. I had turned the covering on his bed back a little, and under it I saw ten or more pamphlets of a serial novel. The uppermost pamphlet contained the sixteenth chapter with the heading, "The Mysterious Murder of Sylvester Night."

3. Mrs. Froemmlich.

Mrs. Froemmlich went to church every Sunday and doubtless believed herself to be a very pious woman. One day I stepped into her room. She was seated at the piano and playing the melody of the hymn, "O Where Is the Home of the Soul to Be Found?" She played it with only one finger, and the accompaniment was therefore somewhat weak compared with her rather strong voice. When she had finished playing and singing the first stanza, she turned around and looked a little surprised. She wondered that she had not heard me enter the room and offered all kinds of apologies.

Not being altogether stupid, I soon arrived at the conclusion that she had seen me coming and at once hit upon the idea of showing me, by a concrete example, how pious she was also during the week. "Oh, pastor," she exclaimed, "would that we had already been received into the rest of that heavenly home!" "We must learn to wait," I dryly remarked, "wait until God calls us, and meanwhile conduct ourselves as sincere Christians."—"O yes," she sighed, "but in this world one has so much aggravation. I have been wanting to tell you about my husband. It is quite impossible to get along with him. I really can not stand it any more. He is so irreverent; every time I want to read to him from the Scriptures he leaves the room. With such a man, who is averse to everything sacred, I can not stay." By this time she was weeping quite piteously. "Where is your husband?" I inquired. At the moment when she was about to answer my question, Mr. F. stepped into the room. "Here I

am," he said, "and I have heard everything. Yes, pastor, it is true, I have often left the room and the house too, for that matter. My wife makes life so bitter for me that I can hardly stand it anymore. Not a day passes without her starting some kind of a row. Just before you came she demanded that because she can not get along with our neighbor's wife I should also stop having any social intercourse with our neighbor, and since I refuse to comply with her demand, she finds it impossible to live with me any longer and even speaks of getting a divorce. Not because I despise God's word, but because I have no respect for her type of piety, it goes against the grain with me to listen when she wants to read to me from the Scriptures."

While he was talking, the woman had repeatedly tried to interrupt him; now that he had finished his side of the story, she flooded him with an ocean of derisive and slanderous terms, quite forgetting my presence. Evidently, she was showing herself in her true colors. That was the pious woman who went to church every Sunday and had just sung a hymn of longing for the heavenly home.

4. Deacon Grobig.

This man told everybody what a needful institution the Church is, and all his acquaintances regarded him as a staunch churchman; and when anyone said to him, "Grobig, you should have become a minister," he felt very much flattered by such speeches. When he believed the occasion to be opportune, he himself delivered speeches that were of a very edifying character. For instance, when he had been elected deacon, he gave vent to the following thoughts and sentiments: "My fellow Christians, you have acted wisely in choosing me as deacon, things have been rather dead of late, I will see to it that new life is instilled into our congregation. Things are

going to be different, as surely as my name is Grobig. Yes, this I propose to do in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

On the Sunday that had been set apart for the observance of the annual mission feast, he asked his sons, "Boys, have you any money for the collection? and when they shook their heads, he gave them each a cent. The oldest one of the boys, a lad of sixteen years, remonstrated with his father, saying, "Father, I am ashamed to lay this penny on the collection plate, and I think at a mission feast one should give more than on an ordinary Sunday." Mr. Grobig looked at his oldest son a while and then said, "I had given you credit for a little more sense; is it necessary to let the people see how much you give? I myself am going to contribute only five cents to the collection, but I shall do it in such a way as to make the people believe that I have given a dollar." "Even if the people should not notice it, God will see the sham performance, and I don't want to cheat Him." This speech made the father feel a little embarrassed, but he tried to bridge over the matter by saying, "Boys, who can tell whether the money will be really spent for missionary purposes? I am of the opinion that very little of it will benefit the poor heathen. But now we have talked enough; get ready, we must hitch up and start for church."

When the sermon was ended, Mr. Grobig passed around the collection plate, counted the money and reported to the pastor that the offering amounted to \$23.50. In the afternoon the services were conducted outside in a little grove. Another collection was raised, which amounted to \$20.00. "Too bad," remarked the pastor, "that we weren't able to bring the amount up to \$50.00." "I'll fix that," said Deacon Grobig. He addressed the people as follows: "Friends, our collection is smaller than last year; if everyone had given according to his means, a much larger sum would doubtless

have been realized. It seems to me that we might easily raise the amount to fifty dollars. I myself will add fifty cents to it and pass the plate around once more."

After this preparatory speech, Grobig passed the collection plate around once more. Seven dollars were thus realized, as Grobig found out when he counted the money. Seeing that his own fifty cents were not needed to make up the desired amount, he took them from the plate and put them back into his pocket. Then he went to the pastor and said triumphantly, "Now the collection amounts to exactly fifty dollars. One must know how to approach the people; even the stingy K. produced another quarter."—

2. Timothy 3:5. They have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

5. Father Martin.

In spirit I often see him standing before me, the dear old Father Martin, who for several years was my assistant, not indeed as vicar or teacher, but as one of the order of the Levites, who had to render the more menial kinds of service in the church. We ministers are very much in need of such an assistant. Some congregations seem to cherish the opinion that of the different offices which the pastor holds it may be said, "The more, the better." Not only is he engaged as pastor and teacher, but, like a sort of faithful Tom, he also functions as organist and deacon, perhaps even as janitor.

As a matter of fact, I know of ministers who during the winter season had to heat the church. Once I saw a pastor using the scepter of the housewife, the broom, with a high degree of dexterity, in getting the church ready for the Sunday services. I also had occasion to see one of my brethren in the ministry washing the church windows. It always impressed me rather oddly to find pastors busy with this new

type of pastoral work, and I could not but feel sad when in reply to my inquiries as to why they rendered such service I was told, "Nobody else wants the job." No congregation should call a man as pastor and then expect him to fill all kinds of other positions, including that of a church janitor.

In this respect, I have always been rather fortunate. Wherever I have fulfilled the duties of the pastoral office, I have had faithful laymen to act as my assistants by attending to the external types of work, such as heating and cleaning the church building, or putting up the hymns and taking care of the Communion set. One of these assistants has found an especially warm place in my heart on account of his sincere piety and pronounced originality. This was Father Martin. He had but recently immigrated from Germany and may have been about sixty years old when I first met him. With his grown-up children he had come to America, and one day he applied for the janitorship in my congregation. "You may examine me at once," said he in applying for the place; "I have rendered years of janitor service in the old country." I assured him that no examination would be needed, since he could easily do the work of a janitor without any special qualifications. "What I meant," he went on to say, "was that you might examine me as to the postaments." "What," said I, "as to the postaments? Kindly explain this word to me." "Why," said he in a tone of surprise, "don't you know anything about postaments in America? We had them in Germany; here in America they may not be in style, but in a regular divine service the postaments must not be missing." I still racked my brain trying to think what particular church equipment Father Martin might have in mind. So I asked him again very plainly, "Just what are these postaments?" "They are laid on the altar and on the pulpit," said he, all excited. "sometimes they are red

and sometimes white, sometimes they are black and then again they are green." It now dawned upon me that he meant the *paraments*, that is, the coverings for the altar and the pulpit, which in some churches are changed according to the different seasons of the Church Year. I could not help laughing at the peculiar terminology that Father Martin employed and tried to teach him the correct term. But he replied good-naturedly, "In Germany I always spoke of postaments; here in America they may use a somewhat different word, I do not feel quite at home yet when it comes to using English terms."—

Father Martin's application was submitted to the congregation, and he was duly appointed as janitor at a salary which to him seemed quite adequate. To me he was ever a faithful assistant. He treated the church building as his own and kept it immaculately clean. "In the sanctuary there must be no filth," was his maxim, and one day he said to me, "I always think that our Lord and Savior does not like to grace a dirty and dusty church with His presence. With the church it is as with the heart, which must be purged of filth before it can be a temple of God." He could talk most edifyingly on spiritual matters, and when the occasion called for it, he did not hesitate to bear testimony of his Christian faith.

In his personal appearance, he was also the pink of neatness. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord," these words of the prophet Isaiah he fully applied to himself as one who served in the sanctuary. With his long black coat, his white hair and beard, and the ever friendly expression of his face, he was an ideal janitor even in his outward appearance. When one observed the reverential way in which he put the altar in readiness for Holy Communion, lit the candles on the altar or poured water into the baptismal font, it seemed as if an edifying power radiated from his sanctified personality.

He was also of real help to me when it came to leading

in the musical part of the service, especially at funerals. With the duties of a janitor, he combined those of a sexton. He dug all the graves and was therefore present at every burial. When we officiated together for the first time on such an occasion, I asked him, "Father Martin, can you sing?" He replied, "I don't know all the tunes, but with most of them I am quite familiar, especially with the melody of the burial hymn." I was very glad to hear this. My dear brethren in the ministry will of course say, "That hymn and melody you should know so well as to need no assistant when you have to lead in the singing." That is true, and I really know the tune of that hymn, but sometimes it happens that by the time we sing the second stanza I find myself composing all sorts of variations, until I produce quite another melody, one that is decidedly my own. For this reason I was always glad to have someone with me who could lead in the singing, and in this respect also Father Martin more than filled his place.

During the sermon, he was an attentive listener. Janitors often deem it their privilege to work at the stove, to close the doors and the windows, or to attend to some other noisy kind of work while the pastor is in the pulpit. Father Martin put everything in order before the sermon began and then sat devoutly in his pew. How well he paid attention to the sermon, may be seen from the following: He once told me, "If a sermon isn't too long, I can remember it for a whole week, and I carry it with me in my thoughts until I hear the next sermon, which furnishes me spiritual food for the week following, and so on."

As he advanced in years, he became partly deaf, much to my sorrow. But his deafness gave rise to all kinds of amusing misunderstandings. Just one out of many instances. I was preaching on the parable of the prodigal son. I had divided the text into three sections, intending to deliver a sermon on

each division of the text. At the close of the first of these three sermons, I said, "God willing, I hope to *go on* with this text a week from today." On the following Sunday Father Martin was not present at the service. When I gently took him to task for his absence, he said, "Did you not tell the people after the sermon that you were to *go on* a journey and that you would be absent the following Sunday?"

With all his hard hearing, he remained in office until shortly before his demise. His final illness was very brief, but as often as I sat at his bedside, he talked of serving in the heavenly sanctuary, and he died in the hope that his Savior would find some kind of service for him in that house which is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Shortly before the end came he remarked, "If I may but light the tapers of heaven, I shall be content." I preached his funeral sermon from the words of Simeon: "Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy Savior."

V. A Few Reminiscences of My Work as an Itinerant Minister

1. The Little Church on the Prairie and How It 'Came Into Existence.

QUITE a number of years have passed by since the writer was engaged as an itinerant minister in the Western states of Kansas and Nebraska. Traversing those prairie regions, sometimes using my feet as a means of locomotion, and then again riding on a horse or in a buggy, I everywhere looked up the Germans in order to preach the word of God to them and in other ways make provision for their spiritual needs, my ultimate aim being to unite them into regularly organized Lutheran congregations.

One day while I was doing the work of an itinerant preacher in the central part of Kansas, I stood before a little house out on the desolate prairie, where there was no sign of a tree or a shrub to break the terrible monotony. As far as I could see, the ground was covered with a kind of grass the color of which impressed me as being gray rather than green. Only in spots a slight elevation of the soil and a somewhat greener vegetation led one to surmise that a few farms were there under cultivation, although no wooden buildings indicated the presence of human folk.

The little house before which I stood was also not built of wood, but of sod. Such houses are very primitive indeed. A plow is used to turn the sod, which is then cut into pieces of uniform length. These are solidly packed on top of one another until the desired height is reached. The four sod

walls, built in the form of a square, are then supplied with a board roof, which in turn is weighted down with stones. All the houses of the early settlers in those prairie regions were of this type.

I rapped at the door, which was quickly opened. The owner of the house bade me welcome, and when I told him that I was a pastor, his face brightened up and with unconcealed joy he said, "Twice welcome!" I was not always received so pleasantly, but often had to hear unfriendly words, and sometimes I was even told, "We are living in a free country and want no popes to rule over us." In the present instance, I had to do with a man who was kindly disposed toward the ministers of the Gospel, and this made me feel happy, as well as grateful. I sincerely thanked God, now that He had heard my prayer and given me an open door.

The genial host at once called to his wife, "Mother, today our long cherished wish has been fulfilled; this gentleman is a Lutheran pastor." His wife shook hands with me, and the tears that moistened her eyes were tears of joy. Before long, we were seated at the table to partake of a simple meal. I now learned a few particulars concerning the history of these good people. Only two years previously they had emigrated from Germany. No lack of patriotism or stress of need had prompted them to take that step. Indeed, they were very much attached to their dear Saxony, and had the means of subsistence. But the woman's brother, who had gone to America at an earlier date, described this country to them as a veritable Paradise. This had induced them to dispose of their German home and to get ready for the trip across the ocean. "When it came to leaving the shores of the fatherland," said my host, "we realized as never before how firmly we were attached to it. Our hearts were filled with emotions of sadness, and when my aged pastor, who had officiated at my

baptism and confirmation, solemnized our marriage and also christened our children, took my hand and said, 'Henry, be loyal to your God and your church in that strange land where you hope to find a new home,' I could not keep back the tears, and while they were trickling down my cheeks I promised my pastor that I would act in accordance with his parting words. He has since then died, but I hope to see him again in the other world, and then I shall tell him, 'I have kept my promise.'"

After a pause during which he mastered his emotions, he continued, "At Hamburg we attended our last divine service in Germany. I shall never forget the text, 'Abraham planted trees, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.' 'A twofold task awaits you,' said the emigrant-pastor, 'you are to found a new home for yourselves, and then you must not forget that it is the duty of a Christian by word and deed to bear testimony of his Christian faith and thus to proclaim the name of the Lord.'—Right after the close of the services, we went on board the ship, and when we awoke the next morning we saw nothing but the sky overhead and the waters of the ocean underneath. We crossed the Atlantic without a mishap, and after the lapse of eleven days our ship had brought us to New York. A venerable gentleman came on board and introduced himself to us. We were told that he was Pastor Berkemeier, and that it was his duty to advise the German immigrants. We thanked our heavenly Father for His providential care. In Hamburg the missionaries of the emigrants had escorted us to the ship, and here a kind missionary of the immigrants gave us the hand of welcome as soon as we arrived."

These good people said a great many more things in praise of Pastor Berkemeier, and thousands of others, whom he welcomed upon their arrival in America, never grow tired

of singing his praises. For more than twenty-five years he remained at his post and fulfilled the duties of a missionary to the German immigrants. The burden of his office was then laid upon younger shoulders, but eternity will doubtlessly reveal the blessed fruits of his labors even more fully than they now appear. Many a good seedgrain, strewn by the hand of this sainted pastor, will prove to have borne fruit for eternity.

From New York, as my genial host further related, they went directly to the far West and thus came to live in Kansas. Mr. Mueller (for that was his name) closed his narrative with the remark, "Here we have been getting along well outwardly, but what we sorely missed was a pastor, and church services on Sundays." His wife supplemented this report by relating that a child of theirs had died, and that they had been obliged to bury it on their farm. It had been a source of much grief to her, she said, to think that their little boy had to be interred without the presence of a pastor to preach a sermon and to conduct the burial.

"Things shall be different here from now on," I remarked, "and if the Germans in this vicinity are willing, it will not take long before you can observe Sunday in the good old way, by attending church." We decided to visit a few of the Germans the next morning and to invite them to a divine service.—

Before retiring, we had evening worship. Mr. Mueller handed me the Bible, saying, "You will be so kind as to conduct our devotions this evening." But I asked him to do as he had been accustomed. He read several stanzas from an evening hymn, as well as a passage from the Bible, and then closed with a fervent prayer. In this prayer he also remembered his guest before the throne of God, a fact which impressed me deeply. I have made a great many visits and have met a great

many people, but hardly have I anywhere found such a simple and fervent life of faith as in this sodhouse. Where one discovers such a family, a good beginning has been made for the founding of a congregation.

The following day we went to the neighbor's. On the way there I heard from Mr. Mueller that the man's name was Traugott, that he was a Mecklenburgian and really did not care much for the church. I liked the man's name, and the fact that he was my special countryman also pleased me, but that he was cold and indifferent toward the church, did not, as a matter of course, meet with my approval. It did not take long until we had reached his house. My escort introduced me by saying, "Neighbor, I have brought you a countryman of yours." Mr. Traugott and I now began to converse in the Mecklenburgian dialect; I had not told him that I was a pastor, so he thought I simply wanted to make a survey of the neighborhood, with a view to settling there. Quite naturally, therefore, he asked me, "How do you like this neighborhood?" I answered, "I like the country here very well, but what I regret is that you haven't a church here yet." "O pshaw," said he, "what do we, as enlightened people, want with a church? I side with our mutual countryman, Fritz Reuter, who also would have nothing to do with these gentlemen of the cloth." By way of reply I told him that he had such a fine name (Traugott = one who trusts in God), a name which did not befit him at all if he cared nothing for the church; and as for Fritz Reuter, he had hardly judged him correctly. Fritz Reuter had chosen his wife, his beloved Louise, from a parsonage and his writings were pervaded by a devout spirit." "Is that so?" Mr. Traugott interposed, "do you know Reuter's works?" "Certainly," I replied, and I could have referred to many a passage in Reuter's writings to verify my assertion as to his religious bent of mind. But I

only called Mr. Traugott's attention to the epitaph which that author composed for his own tombstone:

O Lord, the beginning, the end, they are Thine;
Life only, the distance between them, was mine.
And if I in darkness have groped on my way,
With Thee in Thy mansions pure brightness holds sway.

"By the way you talk, one might take you for a minister," Mr. Traugott remarked. "Indeed, I am a minister," was my reply, "and we have come to invite you to help us organize a new congregation here." He now looked at me in such a peculiar way as if he wanted to ask me, "Why didn't you tell me all this right in the start?" By this time his wife had appeared on the scene, and she answered for her husband, saying, "Certainly, we will lend our help; on the quiet I have all along sighed for regular Sunday services. My father was a German teacher, and we went to church every Sunday; here in America we have been without these services for nearly two years. Really, we are not Christians anymore." "But, mother," said Mr. Traugott, "we have managed well enough to **get along without** these Sunday services, and then, going to church doesn't cover everything." However, Mrs. Traugott, who was a resolute woman, and who, as I often had occasion to observe later, had a wholesome influence upon her husband, over-ruled him by saying, "With a school and a church in the neighborhood, we shall get along better."

The word "school" seemed to have made an impression upon Mr. Traugott, since he admitted, "To be sure, children should receive instruction; we adult people know our duty, but children should be told what they owe their parents."

"It will do us grown-up people good too," said Mr. Mueller; "believe me, neighbor, we adults must learn anew every day what we owe to our heavenly Father." It wasn't neces-

sary for me to say very much. His wife and his neighbor managed to win him over to our side, so that he finally declared, though rather sullenly, "I will come."

"Not quite so sullen, old man," said his wife coaxingly, "just imagine how glorious it will be to be called to church Sunday mornings by the church bells." Here I took occasion to cite the following stanza from Fritz Reuter:

And if on a Sunday the bells sweetly ring,
Take heed of what greetings from me they may bring;
And if thou canst hear them in tones soft and clear,
Then follow their bidding so fraught with good cheer.

These lines were just what was needed to captivate him completely. Extending his hand to me, he said, "We Mecklenburgians are pretty fine people after all. We shall meet again Sunday morning."

Mr. Mueller and I now drove two miles farther to visit the next German Lutheran. "This man's name is Petersen, he is a bachelor, hailing from Schleswig-Holstein, a little peculiar, but on the whole an approachable man." Such was the picture which my coachman drew of the man whom we intended to win for our project. We found him sitting in front of the door, reading the "Germania," a political paper edited from a Christian point of view. "Neighbor," said my attendant, introducing me, "here is a Lutheran pastor; he would like to organize a congregation in our midst." "Oh," said he, "the plan will not be likely to materialize, there is so little sense of unity among the Germans." "In a way, you are right," I replied, "perhaps there isn't another nation on earth more disunited than the German nation; however, there has been a change for the better in our native country, and there must be a change also here in the land of our adoption. The Germans must hold together, and if they are German Luther-

ans, they are doubly under obligation to be unified." "Indeed," said he, "they have this duty, but they do not attend to it."

I now told him of my success at another place, where there were fifteen North Frisian farmers, each of whom at first held his own opinion, but who after all united and founded a congregation, in accordance with their pledge. "When the North Frisians once have pledged themselves to do a thing," I added, "they will invariably do it. They ever live up to their promise."

"Is that so?" he asked. "Do you know the North Frisians so very well?" "Yes," said I, "since I worked among them in North Schleswig and have learned to love them." "Are you, then, a native of Schleswig-Holstein?" he inquired. "No," I answered, "but I once assisted an aging pastor and preached every two weeks in a congregation right on the shores of the North Sea." "What was the name of the place?" he asked with increasing interest, and when I gave him the name, he inquired, "Is your name A.?" When I answered his question in the affirmative, he jumped up and shouted, "Then I have known you for a long time." At first I was a little astonished, but he reminded me of a funeral which I conducted when I was still but a candidate for the ministry, and told me that the person I then interred was his only sister.

The reader will not wonder that this man was now only too willing to take part in the founding of a new congregation in his neighborhood. Mueller, Traugott and Petersen assumed the task of inviting all the Germans in those regions to attend the services on the following Sunday. As a result, when Sunday morning came, Mr. Mueller's house was surrounded by a veritable entrenchment of wagons. Of course, his dwelling was much too small to shelter all those who had come to attend the service, which was therefore conducted under the blue canopy out in the open. We sang the hymn:

Commit whatever grieves thee,
Thy cares and thy distress,
To Him whose heart is faithful
And ever prone to bless.
He rules the skies, appointing
To winds and clouds their way;
Then be assured He also
Will be thy staff and stay.

There was hardly a tearless eye, thoughts of the old German home asserting themselves, and this being the first time that they had in this new world joined their voices in singing this familiar and beautiful hymn.

I preached on the Good Shepherd, who had sent me to gather in the sheep, that henceforth they might be made to lie down in the green pastures, and be led beside the still waters of God's holy word.

After the close of the services we organized a congregation and called it "Grace Church." Mueller, Traugott and Petersen were elected as deacons. Fourteen men signed the constitution, and it was decided to build a new church that very week. The readers may be surprised at this, since it usually takes considerable planning before a congregation can start to put up a church, and ordinarily it requires more than a week to erect such a building. But in the present instance all precedents were broken. To be sure, our little church, when finished, was not comparable to the Cologne Cathedral or to St. Nicolas Church in Hamburg; however, the plans were carried out very expeditiously, and the church was finished within a week's time.

On Monday morning sixteen men arrived at Mueller's farm, he having donated a building site to the new congregation. Several of the men turned over the sod with plows, others cut it up into convenient lengths, still others fitted

these into the walls, while a fourth group applied itself to making doors, window frames, seats, altar and pulpit. Conjointly they worked like busy bees, and it was not long until the church stood there in a state of completion. It was white-washed inside and the interior thus presented a neat appearance. From the outside the church did not differ essentially from any ordinary sodhouse. In shape, it was a square box with a slanting cover. For the inner equipment, a number of people made provision privately. Several women sewed coverings for the altar and the pulpit, an aged grandmother donated two glass candle-sticks, and still another aged mother undertook the job of making a collection bag, the proportions of which were rather ample, while the bell that was attached to the bottom end produced a tone loud enough to be noticed even by the hard-hearing in the audience. Still another person made the congregation a present of an heirloom in the form of a silver cup which was to be used as a chalice.

Thus everybody manifested a vital interest in the undertaking and helped to realize the project in a very short time. By Thursday the building was finished in the rough and by Sunday it was in shape for being dedicated. I preached the dedicatory sermon on the text, "Abraham planted trees, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." In the dedicatory service I also installed the newly elected deacons, and I can testify that all were faithful in the discharge of their official duties, Traugott not excepted.

Years have since then rolled by. The church has caved in, a sod mound still marking the place where it stood. But a new frame church with white walls and green shutters, a towering steeple and a gilded cross at its top stands out in beautiful relief from the surrounding prairie, in testimony that a Christian congregation meets there for public worship.

2. An Ordination in the Primeval Forest.

The United States of America is known to comprise a large and extended territory. The reader will be helped to visualize more fully its immense size if I tell him that all of Germany could be put into the one state of Texas. One should bear in mind, however, that Texas is the largest state in the Union.

Owing to the vastness of its territory, the different parts of the United States do not all have the same climate, the same kind of vegetation, or the same living conditions. In all these relations, the greatest variety is to be noticed. This diversity in outward conditions is not without its effect upon the mission work of the church. In the mountainous states of Montana and Idaho, for instance, the missionary has problems to solve which differ materially from those offered by the forest and prairie regions.

Just now I want to take the readers to the state of Wisconsin, which may be classified as one of the forest states. It has furnished a home for any number of German immigrants, and Milwaukee, the largest city in Wisconsin, is predominantly a German city, having even been called the German Athens. Throughout the state the fruits of German energy and thrift are in evidence. German hands have cleared large stretches of land and brought them under cultivation. Some parts of Wisconsin, however, have hardly been touched by the foot of the white man, and there the American Indian still finds his happy hunting grounds, though not without coming into contact with the white hunter, who occasionally goes in search of game. These primeval forest regions are to be found especially in the northern sections of the state, although there also the Germans are beginning to settle in increasing numbers, so that the church has occasion to do missionary work among them.

It was in those sparsely settled northern regions of Wisconsin, right in the dense primeval forests, that I had to ordain a young minister, who had been sent there to supply the spiritual needs of his fellow Lutherans. He had looked up a group of German families, they had called him as their pastor, and I was to ordain him in the midst of his little congregation. It was a glorious morning in the early summer when I started out on my trip. We rode through long stretches of dense primeval forests, only now and then chancing to see a loghouse, or stopping at little stations along the track. Finally, around three o'clock in the afternoon, the last station was reached. All passengers left the train, I among them. The young candidate for the ministry was to get me from the station and take me a distance of fourteen miles, to the place where he lived. I looked in all directions, but could see no one whose outward appearance even faintly resembled that of a minister. There was one man, however, who did attract my attention in a special way. He seemed to be scrutinizing the different passengers with a view to finding one that corresponded to the image he had in mind. His stature was of the large and imposing type. A long blond beard, with a touch of red, hung down upon his breast, and his gait marked him as one who had done military service in Germany. He came toward me and said, "Excuse me, are you a clergyman?" When I had answered his question in the affirmative, he continued, "Then I have come to get you. Allow me to introduce myself to you, I am Freiherr von Kroneck; but here they simply call me Mr. Kroneck" (he added the last clause as a sort of explanation in parenthesis). After these words of introduction, he told me that the pastor had been prevented by a funeral from getting me and that he had offered him his services.

Meanwhile we had reached his wagon, to which there were

hitched two fiery horses. This was something quite out of the ordinary, since most of the new settlers in those regions had to get along with a yoke of oxen. After we were seated on the wagon, and my lordly coachman had seized the reins, he said, "You will have the kindness to tell me how I am to address you; for I presume that you belong to the higher clergy, being either a Superintendent or a Consistorial Counsellor." I couldn't help laughing, because never before had anyone taken me for a member of the higher clergy. So I humorously replied, "I am nothing more than an ordinary pastor." "But," said Herr v. Kroneck, "you are to conduct the ordination of a minister, and I know that at home only a member of the higher clergy performed those rites."

I now tried to enlighten my distinguished coachman a little on the subject of church organization in America. "In this country," I said, "we do not have the consistorial, but the synodical form of organization. Pastors and congregations unite into a body that is called a synod. This body elects its president, secretary, treasurer and other officers for a specified time, and they attend to all external matters as long as they are in office." "Ah, I see," he exclaimed, "quite democratic, like your political form of government." I continued, "Thus, when an ordination is to be performed, the president of the synod has the duty to perform it; he may, however, delegate his authority to another pastor, and this is what has been done in the present instance." "But where is the source of your ministerial supply? I suppose you get your pastors from Germany," he added. I told him that many of our older pastors had indeed received their education either wholly or partly in Germany, but that each synod also had its own institution for the training of pastors and teachers. Thus the Synod of Iowa, of which I was a member, had a Normal School in Waverly, a College in Clinton and a Theological

Seminary in Dubuque, as well as three academies located in Eureka, South Dakota, Sterling, Nebraska, and Seguin, Texas.—“But how are these institutions financed? The government evidently does not endow them.” “No,” said I, “the government has nothing to do with the affairs of the Church, these institutions are entirely supported by the congregations. In the course of the year, a number of collections are raised throughout the synod, and with the money thus realized the salaries of the professors are paid, the running expenses of the different institutions defrayed and all other financial obligations of the synod met.” “How is that possible?” exclaimed Herr v. Kroneck. “It is true,” said I, “the people must do more for the Church here in America than in Germany, but here, too, the saying proves true, ‘What costs something is also worth something.’ As a rule, the people who have joined the congregation remain loyal to it in spite of the different expenses of the local congregation and those brought about by the various synodical enterprises.”—“I am very grateful to you,” said Mr. Kroneck, “for your information; but if I understand you correctly, you can never be anything except an ordinary pastor?” “No,” said I in a vein of humor, “perhaps I might be elected president of the synod some day, but that office imposes a lot of duties and yields no financial returns. The office is awarded as an honor.” “Yes,” said the gentleman beside me, “it has been hard for me to adjust myself to American conditions; at first I thought my title of nobility would make an impression upon the people; but they began to call me Mr. Kroneck, the German hunter, showing no respect whatever for my title.” “How did you happen to come to America?” I asked. He willingly related that he had felt an ungovernable desire to travel to distant regions. With a sense of aversion he had entered the German army, and after receiving his discharge he had roamed about in various coun-

tries, until he had settled down here in the primeval forests of Wisconsin.—Two years ago he had married, and being the proud father of a healthy boy, he had joined the congregation. “During my unsteady life I was not much concerned about the Church; but now,” he declared, “I am glad that we are having services regularly, without the word of God a man’s character ‘looses out.’ ”

While thus engaged in conversation, we had been driving through the forests on a narrow road, which was also very rough in places, so that I feared the light wagon might go to pieces; but we arrived at the villa of the nobleman all safe and sound, though somewhat shaken up.—Outwardly, this villa was distinguished from the other farm houses by a steeple, but it resembled them by also being built of logs. Inside, however, it looked like a real villa. The floor of the room into which we walked was covered with a carpet, along the walls were stationed various cases filled with books and mounted animals and guns, but everything arranged in the finest order. In front of the chairs lay the furs of animals, and the vacant wall space was covered with diverse antlers. The whole room impressed one as being the den of a bachelor. The expression of my face must have betrayed the feeling of curiosity and strangeness that possessed me, since the nobleman laughed heartily and remarked, “This is the living room of a Latin farmer.” The people spoke of him in these terms, and he rather appreciated their sense of humor. “While I was a bachelor,” he said, “I did not pay much attention to farming; but now I am right in the midst of it.” Asking me to look out of the window, he showed me a large tract of land which he had cleared and made productive.

Soon his wife called us to supper. While she was not of the titled stock, she was a woman with a noble mind and a pious heart; it was she who had succeeded in changing the

queer bachelor into a good husband.—The lord of the house took me to a little bedroom up in the steeple, which was as neat and cozy as it could have been. While listening to the rustling leaves of the giant trees that shaded the villa, I was soon lulled to sleep. In my dreams I was still conversing with my learned host, who seemed to be addressing me only in Latin.

The next morning I was awakened by the report of a gun.

“I know this is Sunday,” said my host when I stepped out of the door, “but I wanted you to take this bird with you as a remembrance. Besides, the bird is of the voracious type.” While he said this, he pointed to the eagle which had just fallen victim to his dexterity as a hunter. We were still seated at the breakfast table when the young minister made his appearance. One of his farmers had brought him along in his wagon, which was drawn by a yoke of oxen. He and I then went to the church together, which was only a mile and a half away. While we were walking along on the country road, he told me of his joys and sorrows in the primeval forest. He also made mention of Mr. Kroneck and spoke of two other noblemen whom he had in his congregation. Mr. Kroneck he characterized as a sincere Christian who did not talk much about his religion, but who had learned many a wholesome lesson in the school of experience, God Himself having been his teacher and taught him things that he would not be likely to forget.

When we reached the log church, the members of the congregation were nearly all there already. Mr. Kroneck was just arriving with his team. The church proved to be too small for the large concourse of people, so we decided to have the services outside. It was a quiet Sunday, and the trees near the church afforded pleasant shade. The seats were placed

in order beneath the branches of the primeval forest trees and as many as could were seated, while the others lounged on the grass-covered ground. The altar was also set up outside, and a little platform which happened to be there from a previous service held in the open served as a pulpit. There was even a little organ to accompany the singing. It did not belong to the congregation, but a certain Mr. Asten (really, Herr von Asten) had brought it along, and it was he, too, that presided at the organ. He played a short prelude and then the whole congregation joined in singing the strains of the inspiring hymn of praise:

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation.

I preached the sermon and also delivered an address with special reference to the rite of ordination. With the laying on of hands, the young pastor was ordained to his exalted, but also difficult office. Yes, his calling was fraught with great difficulties. He had gathered six little congregations, which was in itself no easy task, and now he was to serve them as their regularly called and ordained pastor. Many trials and hardships were in store for him, if he was not only to feed the sheep of the flocks already gathered, but also to look up other stray sheep and bring them into the folds of the church. But he was filled with joyous zeal, and derived encouragement even from any small success that crowned his efforts. Nor did he despair if it happened that he seemingly labored in vain, his motto being, "I must work, the increase rests with God."

We spent the evening at Mr. Kroneck's. A number of the farmers from the neighborhood came to visit with us, and I had an opportunity to see how cordially the baron of former years talked with his neighbors. I could understand the minister's judgment, "Mr. Kroneck is the main prop of the congregation." He controlled the situation, yet in such

a way that it was hardly noticeable. When we drove to the station the next morning, I asked Mr. Kroneck, "Do you feel satisfied in your present calling?" "Yes," he replied, "I am contented and happy;" and one could tell that he meant what he said. We shook hands and thus parted. Often have I since then thought of that service in the primeval forest, of the Latin farmer in the cozy villa, with the family's coat-of-arms above the door, and of his noble wife; for by the grace of God it was through her influence, her honest heart and devout spirit that her husband was led into the ways of peace, rest and true happiness.

3. A Divine Service and a Baptism of Infants in a Courthouse.

One day I received a letter which was signed by a number of Lutherans, who lived about one hundred miles from my place of residence. They wrote, "Come and help us; the Adventists are busily at work here. Many of the Lutherans in this vicinity have already been converted (i. e., have joined the sect of the Adventists). But we want to remain loyal to our faith, so you must come and preach to us. Otherwise it will not take long before all those who are of the household of our faith will have joined the Adventists." Before my mental vision stood the man of Macedonia who is mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of Acts. I could not but respond to this urgent invitation, so I replied, "I will come and preach to you next Sunday."

I arrived in the little village of L. around 10 o'clock on Saturday. All was quiet in the streets; the Adventists were observing the Sabbath. The Lutherans had come to meet me, and were glad to have a Lutheran pastor with them and to think that on Sunday they were to have a Lutheran service. I preached in the courthouse, the public authorities

having placed it at our disposal. The attendance was large; for since Sunday is the legal holiday the Adventists always observed two weekly holidays, and most of them had come to attend our Lutheran service. Contrary to my habit, I preached a full hour. I said that this was contrary to my habit, because I agree with Luther, who says, "The sense of hearing is a very sensitive thing, and one must be careful not to overtax it. The people should always regret that the sermon has come to a close, instead of sighing for the end." He is a master who knows when to stop. Under these unusual conditions, however, I did not think I was overtaxing the people's ears by preaching somewhat longer than usual. I spoke on the healing of the deafmute. According to my opinion, this text afforded me a splendid opportunity to deliver a sermon that befitted the existing conditions. At the close of the service, I announced that in the afternoon twelve children would be baptized, and that I would preach a special sermon on infant baptism. On the way home from church, a man came up to me and whispered into my ear, "The two Adventist preachers are waiting for you at the house where you are staying." "That is very courteous of them," I remarked, and when I reached my quarters, I actually found those two gentlemen waiting there.

The lady of the house soon invited us to dinner. My two stepbrothers (if I may use this term) did not want to respond to the invitation; they hadn't come to sponge a meal, they said. I encouraged them to take seats beside me, and quoted the words of Goethe:

"A prophet to the right, a prophet to the left,
The child of the world between them."

(The Adventists, it should be remembered, regard us Lutherans as children of the world, and believe that they

themselves have the best understanding of the prophetical writings.) At last they yielded to our powers of persuasion and ate dinner with us, developing a fine appetite. Meanwhile the house was being filled with both parties and all were waiting for the inevitable battle of words. Finally one of the two began: "You delivered a very good sermon this morning; I wish you were converted, you could do a lot of good." I remained perfectly quiet, gave a little lecture on the subject of conversion, and closed by saying that I believed I could well do a blessed work in my own church. "No," the second one undertook to say, "the Lutherans do not preach the whole counsel of God."

I looked at him in astonishment, and he continued, "You do not preach from the Revelation of St. John, the most important Biblical book for our times." "Oho," I replied, "who told you that we do not preach on texts from Revelation? But there is one thing that we don't do: we don't, instead of preaching the Gospel, vex our brains Sunday after Sunday in an attempt to explain the different visions contained in that prophetical book of the New Testament."—"One can not preach on Revelation," said my opponent, "if he does not explain everything very thoroughly and show what is meant by the different figures and numbers."—"I am of the opinion," I said, "that I can preach on a great many individual texts from the book of Revelation; but I do not undertake to interpret the many figures and numbers; that seems to me to be a dangerous thing. As a matter of fact, there are as many different opinions as there are explanations, and I do not believe that the congregation receives much of a blessing when the individual members go home thinking, "I wonder if everything is quite as the pastor has told us."

Thus our disputation had taken us right into the Book of Revelation, and since it was half past two, I said, without any

premeditation, "I will preach to you this afternoon on Revelation and prove to you that one can preach on texts from that book without bothering about its symbols and numbers.

The report, "Pastor A. will preach on Revelation," spread with great rapidity. The Adventists were all the more curious because they had been told time and again, "The Lutherans do not preach the whole word of God." As for the Lutherans they were also curious because in the different series of texts that are used during the Church Year there are practically none that have been chosen from the Revelation of St. John, and as a consequence, the Lutherans at L. had heard very few sermons on texts taken from that book. The attendance in the afternoon was even greater than in the forenoon, so that we had to occupy a spacious side room along with the large hall. My sermon was based on Revelation 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." I had practically no time beforehand to collect my thoughts, but I prayed that the Lord might keep me from disgracing myself and His church, and my prayer was graciously heard. The Lord gave me what I was to say in testimony of the truth. After the sermon I baptized those twelve children. By the way, they all cried, without a single exception, so that an Adventist made the remark, "You see, these children do not want to be baptized." The Adventists, it should be observed, do not believe in infant baptism.

The two Adventist preachers accompanied me on the way back from the afternoon services. "Well," said I, "can one not preach on the Revelation of St. John without entering upon an explanation of those images and numbers?" "Yes," said the one, "if that is the way you do it; you didn't preach anything but the Gospel." "That is what I am here for," I declared. "When the sermon brings the sinner and the Savior together, it accomplishes its very aim and purpose. The sinner

can only be saved by the sermon that preaches Christ, the blessed Gospel that He came into the world to save sinners. If we do not preach Jesus, and Him crucified, our preaching is vain, much like threshing empty straw." We now walked along in silence for a while, after which the other of the two preachers broke the silence with the remark, "I almost believe you are converted, even if you are not an Adventist."

We had arrived at my quarters, so they left me. The Lutherans in L. united into a small congregation, and a year later a Lutheran church was dedicated there.

4. Going Astray but Finding the Way.

Has it ever happened to you, dear reader, that you were lost? Have you ever, surrounded by darkness, stood alone upon the heath or in the forest, without any sense of direction, utterly unable to orient yourself, seeing neither a road nor a path anywhere? If so, then you will understand me when I say that after one has been straying about for hours and feels hopelessly lost, nothing can be more precious to him than the glimmer of a small light, though it be ever so far away.

Out in the West I once stepped off the train at a small station around four o'clock in the afternoon, my intention being to look up a number of Lutherans who lived at some distance from that station, as I had been informed by the Mission Board. To spare the Board unnecessary expenses, I wanted to continue my journey *per pedes apostolorum*, by using my feet as a means of locomotion. I had asked the depot agent for all kinds of information; but my questions, as well as his answers, were rather defective, since I knew very little English and he had no knowledge at all of the German language. The reader may imagine how our conversation shaped itself. I shall not repeat my questions here, although no sense of shame would prevent me from doing it; but I will be frank to

confess that my English was something like that of a dear brother who said to the custom collector, without offering any apologies for his defective English, "Nothing zollpflichtiges in the coffers."

Although the information I had obtained by bombarding the station agent with my questions was not altogether satisfying, I very cordially said, "Thank you," and soon left the village, walking—in the wrong direction, without, of course, being aware of the fact. After I had walked for about half an hour, the little station stood far to the rear, and in all directions I looked out upon the seemingly endless prairie. I walked along briskly and hoped to reach my destination in about an hour and a half. Some one has said that the world is beautiful everywhere, and that even the grayish brown prairie may appear beautiful, I experienced that very evening. The setting sun shed its mellow light over the prairie, while a gentle breeze set the tall grass into motion, so that I received the impression of a wide purple sea stretching out before me. For a while I stood still, lost in the thought of such wonderful glory, my soul receiving a vision of "those fields of light above." At the same time, however, I was overcome by a feeling of loneliness, and when the last gleam of the twilight had vanished from the horizon, when the dark shadows of night closed in upon me, and I could hear the howling of the prairie wolves in the not very remote distance, I was seized with a sense of fear and dread. I now began to realize that I had lost the way. When I started out, there was only one well traveled road; farther along, a number of side tracks switched off in different directions, but I thought it safe to keep in the road that was being used most; finally, however, I chanced to swerve into one of the many by-paths, and became lost in a maze of tracks, being unable to discern which was the main one. Meanwhile, night had spread its dark

mantle over the earth. I came to a complete halt. Then I might have said with Uhland's shepherd boy:

"I stand alone upon the heath,"

with this difference, however, that he stood in the light of the rising sun and I in the dark and gruesome night. What was I to do? Yes, what will one not do at such times? Involuntarily I folded my hands and prayed, "Lord, my God, be Thou my shield in this hour of danger, and show me the way to a house, where I may find shelter for the night."

I now continued on my way, walking farther and farther, without any knowledge of the goal toward which I was tending; moreover, I was growing hungry. The image of the lost and straying sheep, so often mentioned in the Scriptures, appeared before my mental vision again and again, but I was also reminded of the Good Shepherd who goes after the straying sheep and brings it back upon the right track. And I must say that while a feeling of dread seemed to creep over me at times, I still retained a sense of trustfulness. I had undertaken the journey upon the request of the Mission Board, its purpose was to supply my fellow Lutherans with the means of grace, and I had committed my ways unto the Lord also in the present instance; so I had the assurance that in some way or other I would receive help.

Thus I walked for several hours; at last I was deathly tired, but I did not venture to sleep, so much the less because it seemed as if a thunder storm were brewing. The clouds were thickening, the darkness grew more intense, only now and then a flash of lightning appeared on the horizon. "Continue instant in prayer," said an inner voice, and while I dragged myself along slowly, I gave vent to the sigh, "Lord, help me!"—At last, some distance away, I saw a light. It was rather unsteady, moving to and fro. First I thought it might be only an illusion, but no, it proved to be a real light.

New life seemed to pulsate through my veins, I walked toward the light as fast as I could, and in about fifteen minutes I had reached it. I was now standing before the dwelling place of a number of so-called cowboys. One of them was outside with a lantern to look after a sick horse, and it was he who now took me in charge. All the others had retired for the night, and this one had also been sleeping for a while, but had got up again to attend to a sick horse, as already stated. To me this was more than a coincidence. The Lord had heard my prayer. True, everything shaped itself naturally enough; but doubtless God thought of the lonely and straying pastor, and it was for him that the young man had lighted the lantern, so that he might find a place of shelter for the night and further guidance on his way. Let men say as much as they like about the futility of prayer, by such an experience one gains the firm conviction that God hears our prayers, although nothing miraculous may have happened. O how glad and thankful I was to have found this friendly young man, who received me so courteously, treated me to some bread and milk, and would not rest until I had lain down to sleep in his bed. Soon the threatened storm broke loose outside, there were flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, and the wind blew a strong gale, but despite the storm I fell asleep as soon as I had laid my head on the pillow.

I slept very soundly that night, so soundly that I did not hear the other men get up in the morning, although there were seven of them and they must have created quite a noise. When I awoke, the sun was standing high up in the sky, and round about me all was quiet. I arose and went into the adjoining room, there being only two rooms in the whole house. Here I found a young man whom I did not know, but who apparently had been waiting for me, and bade me a hearty "good morning" in German. He told me that his

colleagues had decided upon his taking me in charge, since he was a "Dutchman." The rest, he said, had all gone about their daily work. In those regions all kinds of frightful stories were told about the cowboys, but, as the reader can tell, they treated me very hospitably. The table had already been set, a newspaper taking the place of a tablecloth. While we were eating breakfast, my chaperon told me that he had been entrusted with the job of taking me to the German settlement. He said it would be necessary for us to ride on horseback a distance of ten miles in order to reach our destination. He took it for granted that I could ride a horse, and when I modestly confessed to him that I had never sat on a real specimen of the equine tribe, he gazed at me in sheer amazement, and made me feel as if a very important part of my training had been sadly neglected. When I thought of what was in store for me, I almost lost my appetite; but the young man told me that I was to ride a very tame horse, an assurance which comforted me somewhat.

After we had finished eating our breakfast, the young man went outside, and when I heard the trampling of horses in front of the door, I also passed out of the house. I looked at the horse, and the horse at its prospective rider. In spirit I could even now see myself making a certain impression upon the rain-soaked prairie roads. I felt sure that I was about to make a hazardous venture. My heart was beating faster, and I trembled just a little, when I mounted the horse and climbed into the saddle. George, my companion, took charge of my little satchel. All was ready now, and we started. The young man at my side could hardly keep back a smile, nor do I blame him. On the contrary, when I think of the comical figure: a pastor with a long black coat riding a horse for the first time, I wonder even now how he managed to refrain from laughing. For a moment, however, he lost

control of his facial muscles and broke out into a hearty laugh. It was when our horses suddenly changed their mode to travel from a slow trot to a gentle gallop. I saw no other way of saving myself than that of putting my arms around the horse's neck, and it was the funny sight of this tender embrace that made George give vent to a loud peal of laughter. He gave me all kinds of instructions, and I gradually felt much safer, my appearance also became more majestic, yes, I even enjoyed the whole experience and was glad that my fate had brought me into contact with the cowboys: without any expense to receive private lessons in riding, such a thing would not have entered my remotest dreams the day before.

George had promised his colleagues to take me to my destination all safe and sound, so he watched my equestrian manoeuvres very closely at first. But after a while he did not find it necessary to be quite so watchful any more, and thus felt free to converse with me a little more intimately. I had inquired about his career interestedly, and he told me that his parents lived in the state of New York. Following an innate desire for adventure, he had gone West, contrary to the will of his parents. He almost felt sorry now, he said, and as soon as he had money enough to dress decently and to pay his traveling expenses, he intended to return home. He had felt a little homesick for some time, and now, having again heard his mother tongue, the longing to go back to his parents and the other members of the family had seized him with an almost irresistible power.

While thus chatting with each other, we had arrived at the German settlement. I dismounted, and we were on the point of parting. I thanked him for his great trouble and for his pronounced friendliness; but just when I was going to say, "Good by," he interposed, saying, "Will you do me

a favor?" "If I can, with the greatest pleasure," I replied. He drew a letter from his pocket. "Three months ago," he said, "my mother wrote me this letter; while I can talk a little German, I have never learned to read and write the German language; will you read this letter to me?" Here I couldn't help thinking what a regrettable thing it is if a child of German parents is not able to read German. I read the letter to George. Its whole contents were the expression of a faithful mother's heart. She spoke of her longing to see him, she said that not a night passed but that she remembered him in her prayers, beseeching the heavenly Father to shield him, lest he should go astray and enter upon the broad road that leads to destruction.

While I was reading the letter, George had laid his head upon the saddle and wept bitterly. His mother's loving concern for him had touched his deepest sympathies. By way of farewell, he pressed my hand and said with a firm voice, "Now for home!" Through my soul vibrated the words, "A son without his mother can ne'er be quite content." I walked toward the next farm house. My thoughts had by this time taken a somewhat different turn. They have found expression in the following lines:

A son without his mother
Can ne'er be quite content,
And how shall one be severed
From God, his element?
How often I had wandered
So far, my God, from Thee!
The stars in highest heaven
Had lost their light for me.

Then suddenly a longing
Took hold of my poor heart,
To be at home in heaven,

To dwell with God apart.
And presently I saw Him,
In mercy toward me bent—
The child without its Father
Can ne'er be quite content.

VI. Small Talk for the Reader's Benefit

I.

GEARS ago I once met a man who aroused my special interest for reasons that will become apparent farther along in this narrative.—Generally speaking, my interest is centered in persons rather than in things. There are, of course, all kinds of things that seem to interest people. The one is interested in land and cattle, the other in bees and trees, the third in money or its equivalent, the fourth in books and magazines. The list might be continued indefinitely. As for me, I do not claim that all these things do not arouse my interest in the least. No, I make no such claim, lest anyone should think of me more highly than he ought to think. While I have not, as yet, felt any particular desire to own land, while I have not, up to the present time, had any ambition to become the owner of cattle, or cherished the idea of purchasing a few swarms of bees, I must admit that I have been sufficiently interested in trees to plant a few of them. I have, indeed, watched their growth and development with the keenest of interest. It has even filled my heart with pride when in the hot summer days I could sit down in the cool shade provided by trees of my own planting. Not only have I set out trees, but also raspberry bushes, and it was with no little satisfaction that I harvested my first crop of berries, exactly 26, as I recall. Nor can I say that I despise money; on the contrary, I sometimes wish I had a little more of it. And books, I am very fond of them. Recently a dear friend pointed to my book case and asked me, "Are here all thy children?" I keenly felt

the sting, but did not want my friend to notice it, so I simply replied, "I have not yet absorbed all that these books contain, and therefore do not see the need of adding any new volumes." However, I silently resolved right then and there that I would purchase a few new books as soon as my last bill at the Publishing House is paid.

But my chief interest is in persons, not things. With us ministers it should really not be otherwise, because it is our very calling to aid people in their spiritual endeavors, so that when the end comes they may depart in peace and enter into the home of the blessed beyond. The person of whom I want to speak here had by word and deed attracted my attention in a special way, so that I soon learned to know him more intimately. I shall call him "Trueheart." This was not his real name, which I feel obliged to withhold; for if he should by chance read these lines, he might chide me for publishing his name in my book. I have chosen the name Trueheart for him because it characterizes him so well. He was a true, straightforward man and, withal, a deeply founded Christian. One day, while staying at his house, I chanced to overhear a conversation that he carried on with another man, and that I shall here try to reproduce. I was sitting in a room that adjoined the parlor, trying to attend to my correspondence. Mr. Trueheart entered the parlor and sat down in an easy chair, to take his afternoon nap. He had no more than begun to produce those peculiarly regular tones which are sometimes characterized as "sawing wood," when his wife ushered a visitor into the parlor. He was one of Trueheart's acquaintances and, like him, a member of my congregation. I will call him Mr. Merry.

The two were soon engaged in a lively conversation, while I was writing letters and trying hard not to hear what they were saying. But their conversation suddenly turned to a subject which vitally interested me. I heard Mr. Merry say, "Tell

me, why do you make a practice of going to church every Sunday?" He added, "I think it is sufficient to attend church now and then, say every four or six weeks, and when there's a funeral. You aren't any better off than I, financially or otherwise, although you go to church so regularly."

I laid down my pen. Men of unusual ability may do several things at the same time; but since I do not belong to that favored class, I generally attend to only *one* thing at a time. It was so in the present instance. My attention was devoted to "listening" and could not simultaneously be focussed on letter writing. If anyone should tell me, "It was not right of you to listen to the conversation of these two men without letting them know it," I would reply, "Right or wrong, I did it," and have had no compunctions of conscience either. With absorbing interest I waited for Mr. Trueheart's answer.

He remained silent for a moment and then said, "There are different reasons for my going to church. To begin with, we have the commandment of God, 'Thou shalt sanctify the holy day,' and I believe that we can do this best by acting in accordance with our catechism, which tells us that we should gladly hear and learn God's word. Then, I consider it my duty, as a member of the congregation, to fill my pew in the church at the services; I also believe that a father should set a good example to his children, for how can he expect his boys and girls to go to church gladly if he himself manifests no desire in that direction? Above all things, I go to church for my own sake; every Sunday I take home a special blessing. This blessing, neighbor, is what I have in excess of what you possess, and in this respect I am richer than you."

My heart fairly leaped for joy, and I would like to see the pastor who would not have felt the same, had he been in my place. Here was at least one who derived a blessing from the

divine services, and who was aware of it. Consequently, I was not preaching in vain after all, as I had thought in moments of despondency. I could hardly prevent myself from entering the room and telling the courageous Mr. Trueheart how much I appreciated his attitude toward the Sunday services. Perhaps I should have yielded to my strong impulse if Mr. Merry had not continued the conversation. As it was, I waited for his objection. He said to Mr. Trueheart, "What you say about the influence of parents upon their children is quite true; but I do not exactly understand what you mean by that special blessing. At least, I myself have not experienced it, as often as I have been in church. Tell me just what it is that you call a special blessing." Trueheart replied, "I don't know whether I can make this plain to you, it seems that one can feel a thing without being able to express what he feels in just so many words. But this much I know: from every sermon that I hear I derive something. It may be that I receive new light on things that I did not quite understand or that I am strengthened in my faith. Then again, when I had gone to the church sad and out of tune with the world, I grew happy and contented during the sermon, or when I was discouraged and downhearted, I received strength from the word of God to be patient, willingly to bear my cross and in meek submission to hope for God's help. You see, all this is what I mean when I speak of a special blessing that I derive from going to church. But more than this. Let me tell you, when after the confession of sin the pastor turns to the congregation and says, "Almighty God, our heavenly Father hath had mercy upon us, and hath given His only Son to die for us, and for His sake forgiveth us all our sins," I appropriate this unto myself, and with a joyful heart I sing, "All glory be to God on high, who hath our race befriended." And when the

congregation chants the Creed, I think of the hundreds of thousands on earth who with me confess the same faith, and I glory in being a member of the great flock that is under the care of the great Shepherd of the sheep. In short, I leave the church as one who has been richly blessed, and this I do not want to miss, that is why I, if at all possible, go to church every Sunday." Mr. Merry had listened quietly, now he said, "It seems strange that I have never had any such experience; but I suppose you are in special favor with the Lord." "I believe," replied Trueheart seriously, "the dear Lord loves us all; but if until now you have harvested no blessing from going to church, the fault does not lie with the pastor, much less with our Lord and Savior, but entirely with you. When it rains and there is a cover on the pail that is standing outside, no water can find its way into the pail; in like manner, when the heart is not opened, the blessing from above can not enter into it." "People say," remarked Mr. Merry, "that you should have become a pastor, and I really believe the clergy should not have been left without you." Trueheart replied, "I am perfectly contented in the place to which God has assigned me; I even consider myself fortunate for not being a pastor, because if I had many members like you, it might not be long before I should feel like giving up the ministry." The latter part of this answer almost sounded as if Trueheart had grown angry, so Mr. Merry assumed the role of a pacifier and said, "Well, well, I hope I am not as bad as all that, besides, one has a chance to improve if in some respects he is at fault." "Neighbor," said Trueheart, "I am here reminded of a Bible verse: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23). We can not make ourselves any better, but God can, and He wants to do it through the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. You just go

to church diligently and ask God for His blessing; I am sure He will not withhold it."

I could not contain myself any longer; pushing back the curtain, I stepped into the parlor and shook hands with Mr. Trueheart. He grew embarrassed and asked, almost in tones of disapproval, "Have you been in there all this time?" I nodded. "If I had known that," he exclaimed, "you would have been asked to answer Merry's questions." I assured him, "My answer could not have been an improvement upon yours." The three of us now discussed the subject of church attendance from various angles, in general, and then again more in detail. The reader will believe me when I tell him that henceforth this Mr. Trueheart did not only interest me exceedingly, but that I simply had to love him as a dear brother. Not until genuine Christianity is formed in us and we by our lives show forth the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light can we go on our way rejoicing, with the heavenly home as our goal.

II.

Ours is an age of societies. Pick up any daily paper and glance over the page that is printed under the heading, "Society News." You will surely be surprised at the large number of societies that exist within the limits of a single community. One thing is sure: if these societies were reduced to one tenth of their present number, there would still be more than enough left to supply our need. Not so long ago I was talking to a man who told me that he belonged to no less than ten different societies. "That is simply terrible!" I exclaimed. "Under these conditions, have you any time left for your family, so that you can spend a few hours now and then with your wife and children?" In reply to my question he admitted, "I do not fulfill my duty toward the different so-

cieties as well as I should, for if I did I really would have no time to devote to the family circle." However, there are men who take the matter of attending the various society meetings very seriously, and in such cases many a woman hardly knows that she has a husband, nor do the children see much of their father. For the children, the calamity is doubly great if their mother has also gone insane on the society question, and we have known mothers of this type. I regard the existence of these countless societies, lodges, clubs, and the like, as a disease characteristic of the present age and generation.

"But," someone will say, "haven't we all kinds of societies right in our own congregation?"—Yes, it seems as if the church had not been able to swim against the current. Whether these various societies that exist among us are a necessity, is a question which I do not purpose to discuss in detail. I will say this much, however, that in the Holy Scripture we read of only one society, which is the congregation of believers. This society has the motto, "One heart and one soul." Its order of business is laid down in these words: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers." Despite this fact, I am far from denying our various church societies the right of existence. It is with a feeling of high elation that I recall the time when I belonged to a society for young men in Germany, and never shall I forget the blessed convention of such societies that was held in Hamburg twenty-five years ago, and which I had the exquisite pleasure of attending. If people unite for a noble purpose, such as the advancement of God's kingdom, the alleviation of human suffering, or mutual encouragement to keep the faith, such societies can be a great blessing to the church, as well as to its individual members.

In our congregations the Ladies' Aid Societies have practically everywhere gained a foothold. Many a pastor has sung the praises of his Ladies' Aid Society contending that a great many things which were for the good of the congregation could not have been accomplished without the faithful work and untiring zeal of the ladies, united into a body for the purpose of doing effective team work. I for my part have been a little timid about calling such a society into existence. Not that I am a particularly timid person, but I have been afraid of courting strife and contention. The women among my readers will be astonished to hear that I harbor such gloomy thoughts concerning their organized efforts in the church, but these thoughts have their source in an occurrence of which I shall presently speak.

One day I wanted to visit a minister in my neighborhood. When I arrived at his house, he was not there, but in the church, attending a meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society. His wife told me he would soon come home, but I had to wait quite a long while. At last I saw him coming. He looked very pale, and on entering the door he shouted, "War, war!" My imagination became busy. I began to wonder whether my colleague had read the last despatches of the Associated Press, reporting that war had broken out between Germany and America. When I gave vent to this surmise, my good brother grew real angry, as if I were the cause of the war to which he referred. In tones of resentment he said to me, "No, not between any two nations, but in my Ladies' Aid Society a state of war exists." "A storm in the water glass!" I remarked. "You would not be disposed to treat the matter so lightly if you stopped to consider that the water glass is my congregation," he exclaimed, and thus made me feel a little guilty. So I meekly succumbed to him. But what had happened? There had been an election of officers, the president

of the Ladies' Aid had been put out of office and another woman had been chosen to fill the vacancy. When the result of the election was announced, the ex-president withdrew from the society, three or four others followed suit, reached for their hats and cloaks and demanded, as they started for the door, that their names be taken off the list. The newly elected president declared that she did not want the office and began to weep in such a pitiful way that her sobbings would have softened a stone. "Whoever isn't satisfied with us any more might as well leave right now," one of the women shouted at the top of her voice. There is a general uproar, all are getting ready to leave the room. Then the minister called out, "Everybody remain here, we can not break up the meeting in this way." And now he tried to turn everything to a good account. He helped, he dressed wounds, he pacified the contending factions, he dried tears, and closed the meeting with prayer. My ministerial brother was greatly agitated over the war in the water glass of his congregation, and it was then that he gave me the advice, "Never start a Ladies' Aid Society!"

But I have such a society, and they (I mean the ladies) promised me to hold together in sisterly love and fidelity. They also gave me authority to intervene if any factious spirit should manifest itself. Up to the present time I have not been in a position to make use of that authority. This may be due to the circumstance that the Ladies' Aid Society in my congregation has no president—I, as pastor, presiding at their meetings.

Now, what is the object or purpose of these Ladies' Aid Societies? They have a purpose than which none can be more glorious, the purpose of bringing joy to others. If any of the readers should ask me, "How so?" this is what I would tell them: "If the Ladies' Aid has bought a new carpet for

the altar space, or new coverings for the altar and the pulpit, or a pair of new candle-sticks, or has even renovated the whole interior of the church, the entire congregation is glad. If the ladies sew dresses and coats and knit stockings, the orphans and other unfortunates are glad. If they appropriate money for a scholarship, the students and their director are glad. If they have a new furnace put into the parsonage, the pastor's whole family rejoices. Yes, and when they equip the study with a new easy chair or a new davenport, well, it will not be necessary for me to say who is then put into a joyous frame of mind." So there is joy everywhere through the activity of the Ladies Aid Society.

Isn't that a glorious aim? And do the ladies, in bringing joy to others, experience any abridgment of their own joy and pleasure? No, indeed! They find out the truth of the Master's saying, "To give is more blessed than to receive." Moreover, if their work is done in the right spirit, if they raise money by the proper methods, they will find that God is well pleased with them. God Himself is thus made glad. Such a prospect is worth all the work and worry and exertion necessary for its realization. Will you not say amen to this, dear ladies?

III.

Some twenty-five years ago the writer of these lines went on a "hike" through that part of Mecklenburg which has been designated as the Mecklenburgian Switzerland. The name sounds a little presumptuous, and some may smile at the imagination of the Mecklenburgians; their supposed Switzerland containing no giant mountains that are covered with eternal ice and snow, no torrential brooks that force their way through tiers of solid rock and tumble into the depths with a deafening roar, no Alpine roses and Edelweiss. However, in spite of these shortcomings, the scenery in the Meck-

lenburgian Switzerland is very beautiful and enchanting. It causes the heart to expand, especially when it happens to be the heart of a Mecklenburgian, and the sentiments of his heart will find expression in the strains of a folk song, which contains these lines:

O Mecklenburg, dear home of mine,
To thee my heart doth e'er incline.
I love thy vales, thy heights and hills;
Their sight my soul with rapture thrills.

When evening came, practical considerations induced me, as a rule, to find rest for the night at some hospitable parsonage. Being a student, the chronic emptiness of my purse made this mode of procedure almost imperative. Thus it happened one evening that I strolled into the little village of E., brushed up a little and trustfully directed my footsteps toward the parsonage. "The pastor is a little peculiar, but his intentions are good, and one must not allow himself to be bluffed by him." This is what another minister had told me by way of encouragement. Without any timid hesitation, I rapped at the door. The reverend gentleman, whose age one would have placed around the number sixty, appeared at the door and asked in a not too friendly tone of voice, "Well, what is it?" Quite openly I expressed my wish for a night's lodging. The face of the venerable clergyman began to look as dark as a thundercloud, and he somewhat gruffly replied, "Do you imagine that I am conducting an inn? At the other end of the village is the 'Krug,' and there, not at the parsonage, is the place where people must look for sleeping quarters." If I had not been a little forewarned, I should not have been so well forearmed. As it was, I didn't think of a shameful surrender, but said quite lustily, "Herr Pastor, the Bible says, 'Be hospitable without murmuring'." "Ho, ho," said he, changing the expression of his face from a frown to

a smile and asked me in Biblical terms, "Whence comest thou, and whither art thou going?" I answered his questions promptly and briefly. "So you are a prospective brother minister?" he remarked. And what would the dear reader think of it, the elderly gentleman began to examine me in regular fashion. I have been subjected to all kinds of examinations, but when I think back, none of them seems to have been so rigid as the one to which I had to submit that evening before the door of a country parsonage. He concluded his series of questions by asking me, "What is your name?" I told him, whereupon he said, "There, now you may come in and stay as long as you please." He shook hands with me and introduced me to his wife, who was a very amiable woman and treated me as if I were her returned son. It wasn't long before we were seated at the supper table and carrying on a lively conversation, that is, the minister talked, while I listened to him attentively, but not without doing honor to the good things which his wife had set on the table. After supper followed the evening devotions.

This custom prevails in all parsonages. The various inmates of the house come together before retiring and listen to a lesson that is read from the Bible, after which they unite in prayer. In the morning, before entering upon the regular work for the day, they again refresh their souls with a draught from the fountain of the divine Word. But should this custom be prevalent only in the homes of the pastors? No, such devotions should also be conducted in the houses of the parishioners, including your house, my dear reader. Not only on Sundays, but also during the week, we as Christians should let the word of Christ dwell among us abundantly. Either the head of the family, or his wife, should see to it that this blessed custom is not neglected. Do not try to excuse yourself by saying, "We have no time for these morning and

evening devotions." I tell you, dear reader, you must have time for them, because otherwise it may happen that when you rap at the door of heaven the Lord will say, "I have no time," and that would be the most terrible thing that could happen to you.—A man of God has said, "A person who has no time for God, will not be granted the privilege of spending eternity in communion with Him." What good will the Bible do us if we don't use it? As Lutherans, we glory in the great achievements of the Reformation, especially in the rehabilitation of God's Word, so let us diligently hear and read it, lest our glorying should be vain. Just as we nourish the body, so must we give nourishment to the soul every day. The word of God is the supply house from which the head of the family must take a daily portion of spiritual food for himself and the different members of his household.

Perhaps you will say, "I really do not know how to conduct such daily devotions." And yet, the matter is simple enough. While the whole family is still sitting at the table, you call for the Bible and read a passage from the sacred book. Do not read any passage to which you may happen to turn. Not all parts of the Bible are suitable for devotional reading, nor did God provide all parts of the Word for that purpose. It has happened to me that I was a guest at some house and heard the host read a chapter from the Bible, which contained such verses as these: "Eat like a human being, and do not overload thy stomach; do not reach for everything that thine eyes behold." The passage was taken from one of the Apocryphal Books. The reader plainly felt embarrassed, he began to perspire, he stuttered time and again, showing that he did not consider those verses, however noteworthy in and for themselves, to be the proper kind of reading for family devotion, especially not in view of the fact that he had a guest at the table who was a very mod-

erate eater. It is advisable, therefore, not to choose the texts in a haphazard way, but to use a regularly arranged series, such as may be found in any Church Year Book. Having read a chapter from the Bible, you read a prayer from some good devotional book, after which all the members of the family join you in reciting the Lord's Prayer. If you were to add either a morning or an evening hymn, according to the time of the day, you would have an ideal family service. Just try it, I am sure both you and yours will be pleased with the results.

But the dear readers are growing impatient. They want to know what else happened there in the parsonage at S. Well, I spent several pleasant days there. Perhaps I will relate a few of the details the next time. For the present, the long introduction was simply to provide a suitable setting for the talk that I wanted to give the reader on the duty of daily appearing before the throne of grace, and uniting all the members of the household in prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

IV.

The next morning I intended to leave the hospitable parsonage and continue my ramblings through the Mecklenburgian Switzerland. When I told the pastor of my intention, he asked me, "Why do you want to leave so soon? Don't you like it here?" I told him that I found the atmosphere in his house to be very agreeable, but that I did not care to impose upon him and misuse his hospitality. In reply he said, "My young friend, if I am to be hospitable without murmuring, then you must be my guest without murmuring." His logic was inexorable, so I spent a whole week in his hospitable house, a week that has left me many precious memories.

The very first of that memorable week, he took me into his study, and after he had seated himself in an easy chair, and I had also taken a seat, he said good-naturedly, "Now tell me

something." In my heart I thought, "Heaven forbid that I unpack my threadbare wisdom;" aloud I said that I had undertaken these ramblings through the country upon the advice of a paternal friend, in order to see and hear a great deal, but to say very little. It would be far more appropriate, I said, if he would tell me a few things by drawing upon the rich treasury of his experience. In this way I would be likely to learn a great deal that might be of benefit to me in the course of my life.

This answer seemed to please him, because he nodded his assent, and dryly remarked, "You are right." To keep silence, is the proper thing for a youth. Yes, if one could only observe silence at the right time. I am more inclined to do quite the opposite and on this account have had many an unpleasant experience and many a dark hour. But how can one help it, if he is born with a communicative nature? A graphologist once wrote me, "You are communicative almost to the extent of being talkative." He had thus interpreted a sample of my handwriting. Since then I have tried to change my handwriting and to bridle my dangerous inclination to talk. Do I hear someone say, "These very talks of yours disprove your contention?" This question I will answer very quietly by saying, "The reader will notice that I placed over these articles the heading, 'Small Talk,' thus telling him right in the start what he had to expect." If anyone is not interested in these unassuming chats, he surely is not under compulsion to read them.

But I must return to the scene of my narrative. How easy it is to be sidetracked if one does not hold his thoughts in check!—There in his study the pastor related all kinds of interesting reminiscences, especially such as dealt with things which he had experienced when still a young pastor. Since I listened to him **attentively**, I am in a position to draw upon

my memory and give the reader the benefit of what he had to relate. I recall especially the following reminiscence, which I shall try to give in the narrator's own words: "Soon after I had been installed here in S., I was called upon to perform a baptism. The father of the child mentioned the names of twelve persons whom he wanted to act as sponsors. I had no hesitation to express my surprise and displeasure at the large number of sponsors which he had chosen. He assured me that he was simply acting in accordance with the general custom in the parish, and that in some cases the number of sponsors was even greater than in the present instance. Shaking my head, I proceeded to register the names of the sponsors in the church records, and thus found that father's contention verified. Nearly every record of a baptism mentioned a senselessly large number of godfathers and godmothers. Sunday came, and I betook myself to the house of the man whose child I was to christen. A large christening party was in evidence. All preparations having been made, I motioned to the sponsors to close the circle. I noticed that efforts were being made to keep one of the twelve chosen sponsors from standing in line with the others, while he made strenuous efforts to maintain his position along with the rest. I asked the man next to me what all this commotion was about, and he said to me, "Tailor Witt has imbibed too freely, and the others do not want him to stand there as one of the sponsors." Just then this tailor was heard saying, "I am to be sponsor and I will be sponsor." I walked up to him and said, "You can't be sponsor because you are drunk." My words seemed to have a sobering effect upon him; bowing his head in shame, he withdrew from the circle. The child was now baptized without any further disturbance. The very next Sunday I made the following announcement: "Henceforth all children will be baptized in church, and the number of sponsors will be strictly

limited to four at the most." At first this change caused a little commotion, but the doctor said in closing, "since then we have kept up the altered practice."

How easy it is for such a Mecklenburgian pastor to abolish objectionable customs, and I have often wished that we ministers in America might be in a position to deal with certain objectionable customs and usages in the same summary way. Such customs and habits exist among us in connection with the baptizing of children. I only need to mention the objectionable custom of letting months pass by before the newly born child is presented for baptism. He who has learned to understand the significance of Holy Baptism, he who knows that by means of this sacrament the child is received into communion with God and becomes an heir of the heavenly kingdom, must have his child baptized as soon as possible. Then, too, parents seem to be developing the habit of choosing all kinds of strange sounding names for their children. To me it seems extremely ridiculous if Mr. Schulz has his son named Archibald Talbot, or if Mrs. Mueller insists upon having her little daughter baptized Genevieve Vivian, or if Mr. Meier, who is but an ordinary day laborer, chooses for his son and heir the name of Le Roy (the king). The whole matter becomes all the more laughable when one knows that the parents of the child can not even spell these foreign names correctly. Why don't they retain the good old German names? The tendency to discard everything which betrays one's German ancestry manifests itself even in the names that German parents select for their offspring.

And should not parents see to it that those whom they ask to be sponsors are persons who have been duly baptized and confirmed, and who themselves hold to the Creed which they are asked to confess in the name of the child, instead of allowing themselves to be prompted by all kinds of invalid reasons to select altogether unqualified sponsors, and thus imposing

upon the pastor the unpleasant duty of rejecting them? We ministers simply can not admit any and everybody to assume the duties and responsibilities of sponsorship. I know of a case where a pastor refused to accept as sponsor a man who was a notorious infidel and took special delight in designating himself a freethinker, and where the father angrily declared, "Then you can not baptize my child." On the other hand, I have never been able to understand why the pastors of a certain Lutheran synod should refuse to accept people from our congregations as sponsors.

Just another point. The sponsors themselves should know that they assume certain sacred duties, that sponsorship is not merely a matter of being present at the child's baptism and making it a present of a new dress at its next birthday or at Christmas time, but that they are under obligation to assist in the Christian training of the child and to pray for its spiritual welfare. Then only will the institution of having sponsors prove a real blessing. Otherwise it is nothing but a matter of form.

Yes, there are many things in connection with baptism that need to be improved or corrected. If the reader will remember a few of these things and use his influence in favor of bringing about any needed reform, this article will not have been written in vain.

V.

In former days the German people often observed the widely spread custom of ornamenting their houses with all kinds of inspirations. Usually these were short rhymes or epigrammatic sentences, intended to give those who passed by or entered the house wholesome food for thought. In many instances, such a house, now perhaps hoary with age, has for generations been a messenger of God, prompting a busy and

turbulent world to pause for a moment and ponder thoughts that have eternal value.

Years ago I was a guest in a house which strongly reminded me of that ancient custom. While it had no inscription chiseled into the lintel above the door of entrance, all the doors were provided with little plates upon which words of an admonitory and edifying nature were inscribed. At that time, I made the rounds and copied all these inscriptions into my notebook. To my sorrow, this notebook has become mislaid, but some of those inscriptions have become firmly impressed upon the tablets of my memory. The door of entrance to the house bore the inscription:

A house where Jesus Christ doth reign
Each day in happiness will gain.

On the barndoor I found the rhyme:

On the blessing God doth send
All our earthly goods depend.

The door of the guest-room was provided with a Bible verse, which speaks of our being pilgrims in this world, as well as with the first line of a hymn:

Here as a guest I dwell.

On the door to the place where the porkers were kept, one read the Bible passage: "Cast not your pearls before swine." By this time the reader will begin to think that the man who lived in the house here in question must have been very peculiar. But while he evidently had his peculiarities, one of them at least deserved warm commendation, and that was his sincere piety. Here is an example in point. The lightning had struck his barn, and the year's entire harvest was consumed by the flames. After the fire had been put out, he gathered the members of his family for a prayer of thanksgiving to God, seeing that all the members of his household had

been graciously spared in the storm. At another time he was walking along on the public highway when a man fell in with him and began to make fun of his piety. He spent some time in the attempt to quicken the man's conscience; but this only seemed to make bad matters worse, the profane jester dragging all that a Christian holds sacred down into the dirt and dust. Meanwhile they had arrived at the house of the Christian, who said to his traveling companion, "You may have noticed that I stopped replying to your impious jestings. But if you will accompany me a few steps farther, I shall give you my answer." The jester agreed to go with him, so he led him to the stable where his porkers were and showed him the inscription above mentioned. Letting the jester stand there to ponder the inscription, he went into his home.—

Yes, he was a peculiar man. One evening he and the writer were sitting in front of his door. I called his attention to the inscriptions on the various doors of his buildings. He remarked, "These inscriptions are something external, but the spirit which they reveal must rule and guide us in our homes if they are to be regarded as being Christian in character. You are still a young man, let an old man tell you this one thing: We must allow the Savior to enter and to influence our homes, or our Christianity amounts to nothing; but where Jesus is allowed to rule a house, the gain is beyond measure, as I can testify from my own experience. It is true," said he, pointing to the inscription on the door:

"The house where Jesus Christ doth reign
Each day in happiness will gain."

Our conversation was interrupted. A young man came our way and extended friendly greetings to my host, saying, "Good evening, Uucle Fritz." The person thus addressed made a friendly response and inquired, "Well, Henry, what's the news?" I felt as if my presence might embarrass the young

man, so I arose and wanted to absent myself. "Just keep your seat," said the old gentleman, "what my nephew has to tell me is nothing so secret but that you can hear it. Are you agreed Henry?" he asked. "Indeed, Uncle," said he, smiling, "I simply wanted to tell you that I am engaged to be married, and that the wedding is to take place in four weeks." "Bravo, my boy," replied Uncle Fritz, "it is the duty of every young man to make a girl happy. I hope you have gone about the matter circumspectly and that you will be happy." "Why shouldn't we become happy," said the young man, "seeing that we love each other." "That alone will not do it," replied Uncle Fritz seriously, "a lamp will go out unless it is regularly replenished with oil; in like manner, love will cease unless it receives strength and constancy from some other source." "This is another instance, Uncle, in which I do not quite understand you," said the young man. "Do you see the inscription there on the door?" inquired his uncle. The young man nodded. His uncle then went on to say, "Go with Jesus to thy task, this above all things applies to the important step which you are about to take." Thus his conversation assumed a very serious aspect. It was a sort of preliminary wedding sermon which the old gentleman delivered to his nephew. In conclusion I heard him say, "Believe me, Henry, true happiness is to be found only in fellowship with Jesus; but there it may be found without doubt." Henry bade his uncle good night and went his way. The old gentleman then also extended his hand to me and said, "How full of sunshine every home would be if Jesus were always there to grace it with His presence!"—

He went into the house, while I remained outside yet for a while. The nightingale was singing in the distant thicket, the moon flooded the garden with its soft light, the odor of roses filled the air. It was an evening that could not have been more favorable for my pondering the things I had heard. Later,

after I had entered the ministry and saw the different bridal couples standing before me, I often reverted in thought to that particular evening, and through my soul vibrated the strains:

Where Jesus Christ as Lord doth reign,
Each day in happiness will gain.

Oh, how many times the young bridal couple forgets the chief thing on its wedding day, the matter of inviting Jesus. Even where both parties to the marriage belong to our church, they seldom reflect on the great truth that piety and the fear of God must be the pillars of a home, if its inmates are not to become wantonly gay in days of sunshine, nor to grow despondent in days when the sky is overcast. Among the wedding presents I have seldom noticed a Bible. And how many times it happens that our sons and daughters do not choose a spouse from the members of the congregation and the adherents of our Lutheran Church, but, like Samson, look for their life companions among the sons and daughters of the heathen, or, which also happens, join the Roman Catholic Church for the sake of a marriage! Our young men and women should consider of what bent of mind the persons are whom they would select for matrimonial purposes. The one party should be in a position to say to the other:

Take thou my hand, as mine I give to thee,
"Our goal is heaven," let the watchword be.

The older members of our congregations are putting aside their working clothes, and one after another is leaving for the heavenly home. We need young people to fill the vacancies, and they must be such as have allowed Jesus both to enter and to influence their hearts, as well as their homes. We want, not Sunday Christians merely, but Christians whose entire life is dominated by the spirit of Jesus, the Third Party to the marriage covenant.

O blessed house that cheerfully receiveth
Thy visits, Jesus Christ, the soul's true friend,
That far beyond all other guests believeth
It must to Thee its warmest cheer extend;
Where every heart to Thee is fondly turning,
Where every eye for Thee with pleasure speaks,
Where all to know Thy will are truly yearning,
And everyone to do it promptly seeks.

VI.

One day I received a letter from a dear Brother, asking me to come and pay him a visit. He had been called by the Mission Board to take charge of a lonely mission field. For a long time he had not seen the face of a brother minister, and there were also different questions concerning his work that he wanted to discuss with me. As soon as possible I started out on a trip to visit that Brother in his loneliness. Having been a missionary myself, I could sympathize with him.

I had reached my destination. Where I had expected to see a depot, there was nothing but a miserable shed and a small platform. I saw no house far and near, but trees and thickets were in evidence everywhere. Hardly had I alighted from the train, when I beheld my friend coming toward me with a happy smile and lively gesticulations. When we had reached each other and shaken hands, it would not have been necessary for him to tell me, I could see that he greatly rejoiced at my appearing on the scene. He untied his horse, which he had tied to a tree near the station, and we drove out into the country to the place where he had his headquarters. The road was something that hardly deserved this name, stumps and brush of all kinds greatly impeded our progress, since we had to drive around them, often at the risk of upsetting the buggy. We passed a few little huts on the way, some of which were occupied by families that belonged to my friend's congregation.

After a drive of about five miles, we had arrived at his dwelling, or rather at a place where he lived and boarded. It was a little house built of rough lumber and consisting of only two rooms, besides the kitchen. Of all the houses in the neighborhood, it was the most stately. Here the minister staid with a family which consisted of six members, a man, a woman and four children. We entered. Everything was very primitive and bore the imprint of poverty. The inside walls were covered with common newspapers, the stovepipe passed directly through a hole in the roof, cracks and holes permitted plenty of air, which probably accounted for the fact that the windows were nailed fast and could not be opened. One of the rooms was used as the living room, but also as the play room of the children and the pastor's study, as well as his sleeping quarters; in the other, smaller room, the family slept, and it was at the same time used for storage purposes. How cold this humble dwelling must have been in winter! No stove could heat sufficiently a house of this type. I mentioned this to my friend. "O," said he, "that is not the worst thing, although I have often frozen in the winter, and needed an extra blanket to shield me against the snow that penetrated through the cracks; what I feel to be a real calamity is the circumstance that I can hardly ever spend an hour quite alone and undisturbed. I am thus greatly handicapped when it comes to studying my sermon."

The divine services were being conducted in private houses. As may be imagined, this was a very unsatisfactory arrangement, causing all kinds of difficulties and inconveniences. But my friend was of good cheer. "The Lord has put me here, and I will do what I can to build His Kingdom." Such were the words he used in expressing the sentiments of his heart. One thing, however, that greatly burdened his soul was the spirit of strife and contention manifested in the con-

gregation and in the attitude of individual families toward one another. How often our itinerant pastors have complaints to offer in this direction! Though a congregation be ever so small, factions are formed and greatly hamper its development.

If our congregations only knew with what difficulties our itinerant pastors have to grapple and what hardships they have to endure, they would support the work of Inner Missions much better with their prayers and contributions. During my visit with that young pastor I had preached in a little congregation which worried him most, admonishing the people as earnestly as I could to hold fast the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Later he wrote me that my words had fallen on good soil and borne fruit in abundance, a communication that surely gladdened my heart.

After the lapse of a decade or more, I again chanced to visit those regions. I could hardly recognize them, so great was the change. In America everything moves along with rapid strides. It was so also in this instance. The unsightly huts had made room for stately houses. Signs of prosperity were visible everywhere. A spacious church had been erected, and the whole life and work of the congregation flourished abundantly. The good seed, which was sown under the most adverse circumstances, had borne fruit. The faithful workman in the Lord's vineyard had not labored in vain.

What is more encouraging than to see one's work crowned with success? It is true, we should do the work which the Lord has given us to do even when we can not see anything tangible as the fruit of our labors. But if the Lord lends us His blessing, so that we can bring in many precious sheaves from the harvest field of mission, be it abroad or in our own land, it fills our mouth with laughter and our tongue with singing. Yes, we are thereby also encouraged to go ahead with the good work, we, I say, all of us. The missionaries are

at the front, but the congregations must stand back of them with their prayers and with their liberal gifts for missionary purposes. What a source of strength and comfort it is for our itinerant ministers and missionaries to have the assurance: we do not stand alone! The prayers that arise in the individual congregations are as vapor that thickens into clouds, from which the refreshing rains descend. The hearts of our missionaries are refreshed by them. Our contributions make it possible to pay the itinerant pastors a somewhat adequate salary, so that in addition to their many other cares and burdens they do not need to worry about their daily bread.

Why have I gone to the trouble of restating these things, which are so generally known? Because they need to be restated, lest we forget them. The reader is asked to take them to heart and to support the work of our itinerant ministers with greater liberality. The officers of the good synod often feel as if their hands were tied, because they haven't the necessary funds at their disposal in order to lend financial support to the struggling mission churches. Let us supply them with these funds. When a collection is taken up, let us be mindful of the words, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." If we have experienced the blessing of God in any special way, whether it be that we have been protected from danger, spared in sickness and peril of death, crowned with success in our work, or made glad by the arrival of a new and healthy child, let us make a *special thankoffering*.

Some of the readers might feel disposed to object, saying, "You pastors are always admonishing us to make liberal donations for synodical purposes, forgetting perhaps that we need so much money to keep up our own congregation; the work of the home church will suffer if so much money is collected and sent away." My reply is, "Dear friends, we pastors

do not demand anything; it is the Lord who has need of these things. We poor creatures, however, should consider ourselves honored if the Lord is willing to make use of our mites in the execution of His great plans concerning the salvation of fallen and suffering humanity. In view of the contention, however, that the congregation at home must suffer when so much is demanded for the general work of the church, including home and foreign missions, I am reminded of a certain negro minister. His deacons had remonstrated with him, saying, "You will ruin the congregation with your many collections." "Very well," he said, "I will announce another collection and tell the congregation that the success of this collection is to decide the question as to whether or not any more shall be raised." The colored preacher, accordingly, announced the collection as he said he would, and the success was greater than ever before. So he made the announcement, "We shall keep right on with these collections, and if the congregation is collected to death, as some fear it will be, I shall with pleasure preach its funeral sermon on the text, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." I believe the colored preacher was right. If one dies in well-doing, his is surely a blessed death. Nor does God ask us for anything that He does not return to us a thousandfold. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord." Who would not consider this a safe and profitable loan?

VII.

In examining the index to Dr. Berkemeier's commendable book, "Hirtenstab und Hirtenschalmei," I came upon the following characterization of a chapter: "Things That Also Need to Be Told." Without doubt, the heading of this chapter was advisedly chosen. I at once turned to the number of the page given in the index, so as to satisfy my curiosity to know what particular things the author had in mind. When I had finished reading that interesting chapter, I said to myself, "The

author is right. These things also need to be told." Among others, he discusses a matter concerning which one reads very little in books, and which even the church papers are prone to avoid. So I thought I might make it the subject of a chapter in this division of my book, it being my aim to discuss matters which are vitally related to the life of a Christian congregation. By this time the reader may have grown impatient. I can already hear someone say, "Why this long introduction? Come to the point, my dear sir." Contain yourself, dear reader, I shall presently announce my subject. Perhaps you will not read this article any further if you find out what its subject matter is to be. Along with the things that also should be told must be mentioned *the pastor's salary*. And thus I have boldly stated my subject.

The question concerning the pastor's salary is of such a touchy character that one hesitates to broach it. People are so apt to jump at the conclusion that we ministers are only after the money, holding the holy office merely as a means of earning a livelihood. But even at the risk of arousing such thoughts here and there, I shall proceed to express my views on the matter, because I know that in this particular phase of congregational life there is much room for improvement. A pastor, to be sure, must not be a servant of mammon. It is his business to feed the sheep, not to fleece them. He must seek the people, not the people's money. But, on the other hand, he is by divine and human rights, entitled to an adequate salary. That the pastor must receive a salary, that he and his family must be given the means of subsistence, all will readily admit. However, many congregations fall short in two respects: they do not pay the pastor an *adequate* salary, and they often fail to pay it to him *when it is due*.

When our synod compiles its statistics from the parochial reports, the figures pertaining to the salaries of our pastors

make a very poor showing. I am well aware of the fact that these figures do not tell the whole story. Thus, in most instances, the congregation has a parsonage, so that the pastor does not need to rent a house, and often the pastor also is furnished wood, feed for his horses and provisions for his table. Yes, and this is at least one consolation. Were it not for these extra considerations, it would be absolutely impossible for a large number of pastors to eke out a bare existence. It is no rare occurrence that a common laborer, whose expenses are not nearly so great as those of his pastor, has a much larger annual income than he. Many members of our congregations have no hesitation in saying, "If I didn't have a larger income than the average pastor, I don't see how I would manage to get along." But the pastor is expected to manage it some way or other; moreover, people want to see everything proper in his house, and he, as well as his family, is supposed to dress in good taste. It must be remembered, too, the pastor has a lot of expenses which the average layman can avoid: he must do a certain amount of traveling when he attends conferences and synodical meetings, he must add new books to his library from time to time, many of the unfortunate class rap at his door, and he is supposed to be hospitable without murmuring.

There is no fairness in the practice of paying the pastor a mere pittance for his services. He has studied for a number of years, this has required the expenditure of energy and money, he is now ready to enter the ministry, to consecrate all his learning, all his ability, all his strength, all his time, even his very self to the work of the Lord and the church, and by way of remuneration he receives less than a thousand a year. How can he and his family live on such an income? A business man recently said to me, "I can not but marvel at you German ministers for being able to get along with so little." As a matter of fact, English ministers are ready to faint when they

are told what kind of salaries the German congregations pay their pastors. It is nice to be the object of wonder, but the German ministers would be benefited more by an improvement of their financial status.

According to the reports of our church papers, there is a dearth of ministers. Why? One of the causes is the inadequate salary that the average pastor receives. This cause should by all means be removed. Nay, it *must* be eliminated. It must; for I believe, and do not hesitate to say it, the world simply can not get along without the ministers of the Gospel. This may sound presumptive, but anyone who gives the subject careful thought will agree with me.

Occasionally one hears or reads that a congregation of its own accord gave the pastor a raise of salary. That is to say, it was not necessary for the pastor to tell his congregation about his financial embarrassment and fairly to beg that a few dollars be added to his monthly allotment. To such a congregation I take off my hat, hoping at the same time that many others will be prompted to follow its praiseworthy example.

Alas, there are too many congregations of the opposite type! I know of a congregation, and there are many others like it, where thirty years ago each member paid \$5.00 per year toward the pastor's salary, and today they are still paying the same amount, although practically all of them have meanwhile grown wealthy. How do you harmonize this?—I know of a man, and he has many colleagues, who fifteen years ago, when he had the burden of a large debt to bear, contributed ten dollars toward the pastor's salary; today, having paid his debts and raising from ten to fifteen thousand bushels of wheat on his farm every year, his contribution to the salary of the pastor amounts to no more than twelve dollars. Does he give "according as the Lord hath prospered him?" I have firsthand knowledge of a congregation in the midst of which many new houses

and barns are built every year; but the parsonage looks the same now as it did eighteen years ago. At that time the pastor moved into the parsonage with his young bride, now his family is composed of nine members, and more room is urgently needed. But nothing is being done to relieve the situation.

It seems to me that the pastor is entitled to a share of the improvements that are visible on all sides. The salary that we receive is not an alms, is not a free gift, but something to which we are entitled. The congregation gets its returns for what it pays the pastor. Here is the pastor's time, energy, knowledge and ability, she reaps the benefit of their use. Someone might object, "But if the people themselves are poor, how can they do for the pastor what you desire of them?" My answer is this: "In such cases the pastor will, as a matter of course, be ready and willing to get along on a small income and to share the poverty of his people." In our mission congregations we have cases of this type, where our pastors practice selfdenial in point of bodily comforts, and still do their work with a glad heart. What I have written applies to older and well established congregations:

The pastor, then, should receive an adequate salary. But it should also be paid to him *when it is due*. A great many members of our congregations work in factories, and when payday comes, they want their wages. They would become very much incensed if they were told, "There is no money in the treasury, you must wait, perhaps you will receive a share of your wages in two, perhaps in four weeks." Now take the case of a pastor. The month or the three months have elapsed, the pastor expects to receive his salary, he has obligations to meet, and here he is told, "Pastor, nothing has been paid into the treasury;" or, "Only fifteen dollars have been paid; you will have to wait until we can collect the money." In some cases he may even be expected to visit the parishioners in their

houses and collect his own salary. It is time that our congregations should learn to attend to all matters of business in a businesslike way.

"A laborer is worthy of his hire," says the Bible, and again, "They who preach the Gospel shall live by the Gospel." And if "the elders that rule well shall be counted worthy of double honor," then let the congregation show them such honor also by paying them an adequate salary, and by paying to them when it is due.—There, I have unburdened my heart. I do not think that I have said too much. But if anyone should be disposed to complain, "Sir, you have hurt my feelings," I should say to him, "Sir, it was my intention to strike home."

VIII.

"The congregation is very much dissatisfied with our pastor," said one of the church deacons to me during a visitation that I was conducting. "Why?" I asked. He then gave me the reason. "Every Sunday," said he, "our pastor reads us the Levites, and we don't like that." (To read the Levites is an idiomatic expression in German, for which the saying, "to read anyone the riot act" is approximately the English equivalent.) "You could hardly have paid your pastor a finer compliment," said I, "than by saying that he reads you the Levites." "How's that?" he asked in a puzzled way. I now entered upon an explanation of the oft-used and much abused term, reading the Levites to anyone. "It really means," said I, "to put the people in mind of their duties. The expression, to read the Levites, gets its meaning from the third book of Moses, which is known by the Latin name Leviticus. This book tells us all about the duties of the Levites. They belonged to the tribe of Levi and were set apart by the Lord to do all kinds of service in the temple, as assistants to the priests. Hence, when it is said that the pastor reads the Levites to his congregation, it means nothing more nor less than that he, in a forceful and

detailed way, reminds the members of the congregation of their duties. If your pastor does this, he is simply living up to the responsibilities of his office." "But we are not Levites," persisted the stubborn deacon, "we don't want this thing." Nor did I succeed in trying to make him take a different view of the matter. I already felt this at the time, although the angry deacon finally held his peace. Later, I was confirmed in my belief; for I heard that the deacon had remarked, "I believe this visiting pastor is much like our own, whose part he naturally took, because 'one crow will not peck out the eyes of another!'" Yielding to his influence, the congregation demanded another visitation by a different minister, hoping that he would prevail upon the pastor to stop "reading the Levites" to the people.

That deacon had so vigorously protested against the expression "Levites," and yet, it is a fact that the deacons bear a close resemblance to the ancient Levites, being assistants to the pastor as they were assistants to the priests. Like the priests in the days of the Old Testament, we ministers of the New Testament, called to serve in the Christian houses of worship, need assistants, men who conjointly with the pastor lead and guide the congregation. Among these, the deacons rank first. They are usually elected by the congregation at the annual meeting. Evidently, it is not a matter of indifference who may be chosen for the office of deacon. Certain qualifications are or should be decisive in choosing men for such official positions in the congregation.

In this respect, some of the strangest things sometimes happen. In the congregation at X. a new deacon is to be elected at the annual meeting. The election takes place, and Mr. Grosskopp is elected as deacon. All know him, he is the storekeeper. Up to the present time he has very seldom been seen in church, people say that he isn't much of a church-

man; but several of the members have promised him the trade of the whole congregation if he will only join the church, so he has permitted them to propose him for membership, and he has been received into the congregation by a unanimous vote. And now they have elected him deacon. Why? Because he is a *storekeeper*. The people used to talk over congregational affairs in his store, and he then acted as a sort of chairman, although he was not yet a member of the congregation. Now they have rallied around their old leader by electing him to a church office.

In the congregation at Y. Mr. Passup has been elected as deacon. He goes to church quite regularly; but until now the pastor has not been able to do things in such a way as to win his approbation. He either preaches too loud or not loud enough, he is either too outspoken or not fearless enough, now he preaches a funeral sermon where he should have refused to preach, and then he refuses to preach where it would have been his duty to deliver a sermon. In school he is not friendly enough to the children, but he is too friendly toward people who have not joined the congregation.—Such is Mr. Passup's opinion of things, and he sees to it that his opinion becomes known in the congregation. He is elected deacon, and he is glad of it, because now he has a chance to watch the pastor still more closely and to embitter his life even more than heretofore.

In the congregation at Z. Mr. Doestig has been elected. The congregation knows that he sometimes imbibes a little too freely, and that for this reason the dove of peace does not always hover over his dwelling. How often the sad condition in his home and family has been the talk of the whole congregation! Why, then, have they elected him to office? *He lives nearest to the church*, this was the one and only deciding factor.

These are three examples which have been chosen at random, although they are quite true to life. The reader will notice at once that not one of these three men is qualified to be a member of the Church Board.

What, then, must be the qualifications of a deacon? First and foremost, he must be a man of sound Christian character. He needs to have a good name among the members of a congregation and be well reputed also with those who are outside of the church. He must be a man who likes to go to church and can say, "Lord, I love the habitations of Thy house, and the place where Thy honor dwelleth;" a man who sees to it that Christian customs are fostered in his home, that the Word of God is used, prayer offered and the children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; a man who can serve as an example for others.

In the second place, he must be in hearty accord with his pastor. By this I do not mean to say that there dare be no differences among the members of the Church Board. It is not to be expected that there should be absolute unanimity of opinion in all things right from the start. Nor is this necessary; but the pastor must be able to have the assurance that the members of the Board possess the good will to do what is best for the congregation.

In the third place, he must have a sense of appreciation for the upbuilding of God's kingdom outside of his own congregation. The individual congregation, as every intelligent Christian knows, is but a small part of a larger organism, the Church of Christ. The individual congregation must do its share of the great work which the Lord has assigned to the Church. Deacons who understand and appreciate this vital truth are the kind that the church, as well as the individual congregation, needs.

Where the deacons of a congregation have such qualifica-

tions as have been mentioned in the last three paragraphs, they will prove a real blessing and conscientiously fulfill their duties. They will see to it that in the congregation all things are done decently and in order. They will use their best endeavors to keep up amicable relations between the pastor and the congregation, and if ever the bonds of peace should be broken, they will put forth every effort to heal the rupture, admonishing the refractory elements in a spirit of Christian meekness. They will make their influence felt in favor of having the congregation take an active part in the general enterprises of the church: home and foreign missions, our educational institutions, our orphanages and such other works as can be executed only by the joint-efforts of a large group of pastors and congregations. Thus they will be what they are supposed to be, *assistants to the pastor*.

Not any member, though eligible for election to office in a general way, is qualified to serve as a deacon or in a similar official capacity. Therefore the very best and most faithful should be elected, and when they have been put into office, they should be counted worthy of double honor, and given every assistance in the inner and outer upbuilding of the congregation.

Yes, all must help. Let the pastor and the members of the Board take the lead, and all the rest follow willingly and help gladly. Then the congregational equipage will run along lustily, and even when obstacles are put in the way, they will be easily overcome, since all are putting their shoulders to the wheel.

Many a congregation has been ruined, or sadly hindered in its development, because many stood aside, with their hands in their pockets, while some even pulled at the equipage in the backward, instead of the forward direction. Every member of the congregation a Levite, and an assistant to the pastor,

such should be the watchword. And if the pastor ever and again puts the members of the congregation in mind of their duties, thus "reading them the Levites" in the right sense of the term, the congregation should not become displeased with him, but take to heart his admonitions, so that there may be progress all along the line. Therefore, let everyone who calls himself a disciple of Christ lend a helping hand in the important work of building up His kingdom.

IX.

About the time when religious instruction for the confirmation class was to begin, a man came to me and asked, "Pastor, will you confirm my boy?" The gentleman was not a member of my congregation, or he would hardly have put his question to me in just that form. I knew him, and I also knew his boy, although I had never seen him either in the regular parochial school or in Sunday school. I asked him, "How old is the boy?" "He will be sixteen years old," was his reply. "Does he know any catechism?" "I'm afraid not." "Why haven't you been sending him to school?" "Yes, we have been negligent in this respect; but the boy must be confirmed, I and my wife are also both confirmed." "But," said I, "confirmation will do little good unless the children have been previously instructed in God's Word and Luther's teachings pure. When they go before the altar, they must be young Christians, well taught in the one thing that is needful." "Yes, yes," he zealously assented, "you are to put Christianity into him and especially to drill him in the Fourth Commandment; he must learn to obey his parents, a duty which he does not fulfill any too well even now." "If your boy hasn't as yet learned anything, I think it doubtful whether I can confirm him this year," I replied. "O, he is smart and learns easily; if we wait any longer, he will be too old and we'll not be able to do anything with him."

I consented to take the boy, and he was present the day when I began my instructions. I asked him, "So you also want to be confirmed, my boy?" He replied, "Not I, but my father wants it." He had doubtless told the truth. However, he paid good attention, and after the class was dismissed I gave him special instructions in the German language, which he was unable to read. He grasped things very quickly, and at Easter time I was able to confirm him. I also had the pleasure of seeing him attend church diligently after his confirmation.

Cases of this type are not infrequent among us, nor are all children that come to us in this way so well gifted as the boy of whom I have just given such a favorable report. I know, every pastor has reason to complain in this respect. Parents woefully neglect the religious training of their children, and then the pastor is expected to accomplish in a few brief months what requires years, thus making possible what is impossible. We all know that when a house is without a solid foundation, merely resting upon a few wooden blocks, it can not well resist a storm; in like manner, if our children are not given a solid foundation by being thoroughly instructed in the blessed Christian truths while they are still young, they will have no power of resistance in later years, when the storms of life beat down upon them or all kinds of temptations come alluring. What is neglected in youth, can not be compensated for at the age of maturity. Unless we sow in the spring of the year, we can not hope to reap a harvest in autumn.

If thou wilt love thy little child indeed,
Bring it to Jesus, who its soul will feed.
For if thou fail in this, or heedless grow,
With all thy seeming love thou art its foe.

The religious training of the child must not be neglected, and it must begin while the child is still in the impressionable period of its life. It is the duty of the parents, especially of the mother, to direct the heart and mind of the child heavenward.

Religious instruction must then be given to it in school. Our public schools do not teach religion. Sooner or later, a change will have to be made here also. Recently a meeting was held in New York at which the subject of training our youth was under discussion. One of the speakers expressed himself as follows:

“For the sake of America’s future, something must take the place of the religious instruction which in the older countries was given in the day schools, but which we have excluded from our public schools.” The utterances in public print are frequent and growing more so. Educators are becoming awake to the situation, and far-seeing statesmen are realizing a national danger. I venture to predict, that our land will turn to Luther’s principles as a guide and will openly declare for the religious education of our children. The day may not be far off when a portion of each school week will be allowed to the church for the systematic instruction of its children.

However, while religious education is coming to be regarded more and more as a necessity, conditioning the future welfare of our country, the project is still far from its realization. Whatever the future may have in store, it is *now* that the rising generation needs Christian education and training. Lucky are those congregations that have in their midst a capable teacher for their children. Let our people foster the Christian day school and cherish it as a veritable jewel. They tell us that the Christian parochial school can not keep pace with the public schools. We have known this all along, and find it quite natural. A school that has but one instructor for children of all ages, and teaches the children two languages, together with all the branches usually taught in the public schools, at the same time making religious instruction a prominent part of the curriculum, can not accomplish so much in all the subjects taught as is accomplished at the public schools,

with their smaller number of subjects and larger number of teachers. Despite these considerations, however, what an advantage the parochial school has over the public schools! Our children receive instruction in religion, just as some of us did in Germany. If the school is still bi-lingual, they also learn the German language, so that in later years they may understand a German sermon, join the congregation in singing a German choral, and, if away from home, write their parents a German letter.

In our synod we should have many more parish schools with specially trained teachers. All kinds of excuses are offered, but most of them will not prove valid in the sight of our God.—Where there is no teacher, nothing is left to the pastor but to teach school himself.

If he can not prevail upon the parents to send their children to a regular parochial day school, and in cities this is hardly possible, then he must teach school on Saturdays and during the summer, at the same time endeavoring to bring the Sunday school up to the very highest grade of efficiency. In some way or other, ample means for the religious education of the young must be provided. And the members of the congregation should make use of these golden opportunities. Ever and again the complaint is heard, "The parents do not send their children." Such complaints are only too well founded. An appalling indifference is manifested toward the vital matter of religious education. Even when we want the children while the public schools are closed, we do not get them. If we ask for the reason, the most ridiculous excuses are offered, some even leaving it to the decision of the children whether or not they will go to the pastor for religious instruction. It is the sacred duty of the parents faithfully to make use of the opportunities given them for the religious training of their children. There is much complaint about the lack of obedience, but what

have many parents done to familiarize their offspring with the duties imposed by the Fourth Commandment? To be sure, our children must also gain efficiency in secular matters, so that they may be able to hold their own in the world. But the highest kind of citizenship is attained by them only if in addition to the secular branches they learn the great fundamentals of our Christian religion. A thorough religious education and training is the very best equipment for life that we can give our children. For this gift they will thank us even after we have been laid to rest in the cool grave.—Parents, bring up your children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

X.

The writer once received a letter from a man after he was dead.—In imagination I can see the astonished look on the faces of my dear readers. Some may think, “Aha, now Pastor A. is going to tell us a real gruesome ghost story,” and in anticipation they already enjoy the creeping sensation that people are apt to experience when stories of this type are told. As a matter of fact, when anyone tells a ghost story, he may be sure of an attentive audience. I have sometimes wondered why people take such a peculiar interest in the mysterious and the supernatural. May not this particularly human trait find its explanation in the deeper truth that man himself is a mysterious being and destined to obtain citizenship in a supernatural world? However the matter may be explained, if I were now to tell a gruesome ghost story, my readers would all sit up and listen with rapt attention.

But I have no such intention. Although the initial sentence of this article may have sounded a little peculiar, everything happened according to the natural order of things. A man who had lain sick for a long time passed away. I had often visited him and can indulge in the hope that he is now numbered with the blest. When a relative of his came to an-

nounce his death, he handed me a letter which bore my address and also the remark, "To be opened after I have expired." I opened the letter and read, "My dear Pastor:—I would like to ask a last favor of you, which I hope you will grant. At my funeral please to deliver a short address on Philippians 1:21, and do not let them open my coffin in church."

I fulfilled his double wish. When a Christian at the close of his earthly career, while on the point of entering the dark valley of the shadow of death, appropriates to himself the confession of St. Paul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," one may cherish the sure hope that the victory is gained, that the portals of the new Jerusalem have opened to the pilgrim of this present world, and that he has become a citizen of the blessed world beyond. As a rule, to preach a funeral sermon is no easy task. And yet, it is comparatively easy to preach at the burial of one who fell asleep in Jesus. It was so in the present instance. It was a real joy to bear testimony of the faith that dwelt in this sainted man.

His second wish was also willingly granted. I knew how strongly he was averse to the custom of viewing the remains in church. Repeatedly he had expressed the sentiment that the body of a dead person should not be placed on exhibition. I fully agreed with him, and I only wish that this barbaric custom might be forever abolished.

Let those who wish to see the face of the deceased once more, call at the house. There also the relatives should take leave of him. Everyone knows how hard it is to witness the closing of the coffin, and why should the whole scene be staged once more in church? Moreover, what sense is there in letting people pass by the coffin and view the remains of a person who to many of them was a comparative stranger? Let the congregations have a meeting and pass the resolution that henceforth no coffin shall be opened at a church funeral.

Just one thing more I should like to say in this connection. —Recently a man had died in a certain town. His only merit was that he had accumulated great hoards of wealth, and that he belonged to a great many lodges. The body of this man was put into a beautiful casket and placed on exhibition. The newspapers told the people during what hours of the day it might be viewed. On the day of the burial, a huge multitude had assembled. The streets are lined with people, the rich in elegant attire and seated in beautiful coaches, the poor filled with a morbid curiosity to witness the show. The most renowned preacher, who barely knew the deceased, delivers the funeral oration. The praises of the dead man are sung in all variations, expressions of regret at his untimely death are heard. It is stated with special emphasis that he didn't have an enemy in the world, that he lived a virtuous life, and that doubtless he passed through the portals of death into a brighter and better world. Meanwhile the members of the different lodges to which he belonged have been standing outside, clad in their gorgeous uniforms, adorned with scarfs, aprons, ribbons and tinsel; smoking, laughing and joking. Now they fall in line and escort their deceased brother to the cemetery, taking the lead in the long and brilliant funeral procession. In this fashion many are buried, and the crowd says, "What a grand funeral!"

Can we bring about a change for the better? I hardly think so. But we must be on our guard, lest such things should happen in our own Lutheran congregations. The tendency to make a great display at funerals is noticeable also among us. If at all possible, the funeral is held on a Sunday; I wonder why? Flowers are in evidence to such an extent that one can hardly refrain from pronouncing them a senseless waste. I do not say that no flowers should be laid on the coffin as tokens of love and life, but it should only be done where one has strewn the flowers of love and gratitude on the deceased person's

path while he was still in the body; where this has been neglected, the roses on his coffin have little or no significance.

The burial services should be characterized by a spirit of seriousness and impressive simplicity. All hollow display and gorgeous splendor should be avoided. When the Lord takes a beloved friend or relative out of our circle, it is a very serious matter, and in such instances His words to Simon are felt to apply to our case, "I have somewhat to say unto thee." It were well if we understood this impressive speech and lost no time in setting our affections on the treasures laid up for us in heaven.

On the other hand, our Christian hope should spread its wings when a beloved one is taken from us. We do not mourn as those who have no hope, but look forward to a time when we shall see each other again at the crystal sea. Words of comfort and words of an admonitory character should be spoken at funerals, especially by the pastor in his funeral address. And in order that such words may accomplish their purpose, they should be *heard*. I say this advisedly. The mourning friends and relatives often weep aloud to such an extent as to make the pastor's words quite inaudible. It has repeatedly happened that I was compelled to stop in my sermon until these paroxysms of moans and tears had ceased. If a pastor is asked to deliver a funeral address, the mourners should control their grief and observe a dignified silence while he speaks.—An aged mother who had lost her only son, her staff and stay in the days of infirmity, said to me, "I felt as if I had to scream aloud, but I called upon the Lord for strength to remain quiet, and He heard my prayer. The actions of this sorrowing mother deserve to be imitated. Above all things, we must not forget that funeral addresses are delivered for the benefit of the living. Let us with all our heart strive to live in the Lord, so that we may also die in the Lord and

be numbered with the blest. If the Lord but grant us a blessed end, we need not be concerned about the funeral address, the flowers and the escort when our mortal bodies are committed to the ground.—The rich man of whom our Lord speaks doubtless had a grand funeral, but that did not keep him from suffering torment in the other world. Lazarus was carried away and laid to rest quietly, his death was known to only a few immediate friends, but the angels were sent to bear his immortal spirit to the home of the blest in Paradise. The chief thing is that we should be in a position to join the apostle Paul in saying, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."



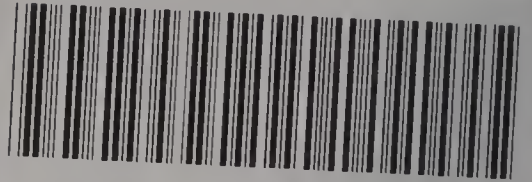
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